Thursday, February 22, 2007 ★★ 8 sections | Vol. 23 / No. 205 P10

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

SPHERE OF INFLUENCE The CBCP rebuke did not let President Arroyo's resignation offer to 11 House sweet guys running on Tuesday, but has been showing Bali from the Bible "casting no off" and "hearing no evil."

GMA 'agonized' over trip

Favila: FVR pressed her to attend China forum

Palace admits GMA said 'anomalya' in radio interview

By Michael Lim Ubac

By Michael Lim Ubac

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO "agonized" over her decision to fly to China in April 2007 to witness the signing of the National Broadband Network (NBN) deal with ZTE Corp. because it came at a time when her spouse was recuperating from a delicate open-heart surgery, Malacañang said yesterday.

The Palace explanation of Mrs Arroyo's controversial trip to China came six months after the NBN scandal broke wide open at the Senate, which has had 11 hearings on the matter that is now threatening to bring down her administration.

Trade Secretary Peter Favila and Communications Secretary Leandro Mendoza denied claims by former ZTE consultant Rodolfo Lozada before the Senate the other day that Pres-

MOVING ON President Arroyo is escorted by (left) Princess-Zaira P. Sibayan and Davao City OIC Mayor Myrna Dalandan-Dino upon her arrival in Barangay Sirawan to inspect the ₱229-million Sirawan National Shelf with Chinese ZTE Corp. Some Malacañang officials are hoping that the NBN deal will be the last controversial project of the Arroyo administration. | PRESIDENTIAL PHOTO

Palace team considers junking 464

By Christine O. Avendaño and Jeremaiah Opiniano

ACTING UNDER THE CALL OF the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, Malacañang yesterday formed a legal team to study the possible scrapping of the controversial Executive Order No. 464 that has stalled congressional inquiries into cases of alleged corruption in the government.

The team—which, according to Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, was formed on President Macapagal-Arroyo's instruction "to look into EO 464 in the context of the recommendation" of the CBCP—was expected to submit

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CBCP won't stop 'GMA resign' calls

By Beverly Mabilidad and TJ Burgonio

THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE of the Philippines may not have urged President Macapagal-Arroyo to step down, but it is not against calls by her opponents to effect

Manila Archbishop Ruperto Cardinal Tenderer Bacani, who was present at the CBCP's defining special meeting on Tuesday and Archbishop Oscar V. Cruz,

CBCP on

Text message says a million people will bring out the troops

By Nikko Dizon, Kristine L. Alave and Alvin Pura

A TEXT MESSAGE saying that a million warm bodies in the streets will bring out troops and oust President Macapagal-Arroyo has begun to circulate among soldiers, but military officials shrugged it off as nothing but a "disinformation" campaign.

"The Army Navy Air Force and Marines are taking us to produce one million warm bodies by Feb. 25 and they will withdraw support from the Mala[illegible] government. Let us all join hands to achieve this goal," the message read.

The Philippine Army spokesperson, Lt. Col. Buenvin Tuzon, said this

TEXT A-10

'FG' initials of Neda official could also mean 'Fall Guy'

By Christine Avendaño and Michaela V. Reyes

ALSO, JAIME MASIGLAS PUTS the other day "FG" could stand for "First Gross, First Gangster, or First Godfather."

Barbers somebody could add "Fall Guy." Malacañang refused to put

NEDA A-10

Madriaga to go through tests on credibility

By Gil Cabacungan Jr., Dona Pazlan Dayan and Christine O. Avendaño

IN CONTRAST TO THE OPEN arms extended to star witness Rodolfo Lozada Jr., senators are skeptical over the new witness, former ZTE Corp. consultant Denby Washington, who claims senators say could cause his testimony like what senator Senate-witnesses did.

"It be a Trojan horse!" asked Sen. Prospero Pangilinan.

"Unlike Mr. Lozada, he seems more relaxed and doesn't sit at witness seat coming to see him. Public and the Floor [minimum of senators remained late. The Senate should not let its guard down. We should treat this new witness with extreme caution," Pangilinan said.

Senate President Manuel Villar also said Madriaga could be a Trojan horse.

"We have to look into his background,

PAGE A-10

Madriaga: Where will I go for safety?

By Jaime dela Cruz

BY TAGGING PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO and her husband in part of the "Comedy Concoction plan plus" that allegedly advanced $40 million in kickbacks from the ₱329-million broadband deal with China's ZTE Corp., Jaime Washington is virtually dead man walking.

But after his explosive testimony in the Senate on Tuesday, no one from the Senate like fellow committee or the Office of Senate Sergeant-at-Arms (Osaa) was on standby to give him security.

When the hearing ended at past 8:30 p.m., everyone in attendance was ready to either retire or attend another engagement except for Washington.

Like a lost and confused child, Madriaga grabbed and held tight the arms of Senator Gun, a former Senate witness who testified in 2005 that Pampanga Rep. Juan Miguel "Mikey"

Arroyo, a son of the President, and his uncle, Negros Occidental Rep. Ignacio "Iggy" Arroyo, had received money from operators of jueteng, an illegal numbers game.

Madriaga asked Sen. "Gun[illegible], where will I go now?"

Gun said it was only then that Madriaga's security arrangement was raised and attended to.

A staff of Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano,

MADRIAGA A-10

Salonga files plunder case vs GMA

By Kristine L. Alave

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO must be innocent from court until her term expires, Senate President Manuel Villar said yesterday.

"The President can invoke immunity from suit but she has no immunity from investigation. (There are) two different things," Salonga told reporters in the Ombudsman headquarters in Mandaluyong City.

"Under the Constitution, any official can be sued in the Ombudsman. There is no immunity from the investigations of the Ombudsman," he explained.

Ombudsman and Bunny Sarmiento, both founded by Salonga, filed the three-page complaint against Mrs Arroyo for violating the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act, Anti-Plunder Law and Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees.

The lawsuit complained to the eighth to be filed in the Ombudsman in connection with the corruption-tainted NBN contract and the second case naming Mr. Arroyo as respondent.

In October last year, former Vice President Teofisto Guingona charged Mrs Arroyo with "plunder/theft of [illegible]

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Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

Manila	30/23 C/73 F	Baguio	23/16 C/73 F
Tagaytay	30/23 C/73 F	Iloilo	30/23 C/73 F
Cebu	30/23 C/73 F	Tacloban	30/23 C/73 F
Cagayan de Oro	30/23 C/73 F	Zamboanga	30/23 C/73 F
Davao	30/23 C/73 F	Cotabato	30/23 C/73 F

EZ2 FOUR DIGIT

18 15 | 7 2 3 5

(Tuesday's results)

6/55 LUCKY PICK Tuesday

9 4 1 7 1 8

MEGALOTTO 6/45

5 12 17 25 38 45

₱9,805,825.80

Joe De V urged to quit Lakas

'Oppositionist in pro-GMA party like a square peg in a round hole'

By TJ Burgonio and Norman Bordadora

PAMPASIGAN REP. JOSE DE VENECIA III IS ACTING like an oppositionist and should have the decency to quit as head of the ruling Lakas-CMD, said Quezon City Rep. Matias Defensor.

"If an oppositionist becomes the head of a pro-administration party, it's like a square peg in a round hole. It's just incumbent for the (House) Speaker to resign as president of Lakas," Defensor told a press briefing yesterday.

Rise De Venecia, who was ousted as Speaker last month, has turned against President Macapagal-Arroyo, he would no longer command the respect of party officials and members, Defensor said.

"If he stays there, it's questionable. What happens is minority, bloody will follow us," he said.

Following his ouster, De Venecia has delivered two privilege speeches attacking the President and accusing her of corruption. Last Monday, he called for the President to resign, saying she has lost the moral ascendancy to lead the country.

'Good friend'

Defensor said De Venecia, who has been a "good friend" to his Lakas party mates, should make a clean break and avoid the malicious intent of being misunderstood.

"He's a friend. He's good to us. He has been a Speaker and a very competent one at that. Out of respect (for him), we are waiting for him to tell us (he's stepping down)," he said.

He said that although the party has not taken up the question of De Venecia's expulsion, (but) has been talk of it.

"Expulsion is the decision of the party. Nobody alone can do this. That is a cumulative decision that can broken up," he said.

When asked (what was the perfect time for De Venecia to resign, Defensor said in jest, "Yesterday."

Dr. Venecia, meanwhile, has asked former President Fidel Ramos to oppose the ongoing merger process between the Lakas-CMD and the President's Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino (Kampi).

"The merger of Lakas-CMD and Kampi should not be addressed anymore. To do so will create the demise of the party that we (and I) together with the late Noel Wien founded and nurtured," De Venecia said in a Feb. 25 letter to Ramos.

Former congressman Prospero Pichay (the Lakas vice president for external affairs) said yesterday attacks from detractors should not hamper an honest dialogue. "Let's not allow that to be scheduled at a later date."

In the same breath, however, he denied that Teñoso and his group joined any dinner or specific caucus. He alleged it was Arar to think Teñoso and company would stage a repeat of their Nov. 29 coup d'etat-cum-rest and Manila Peninsula siege.

Reminiscent talked to media shortly after the PMP's top brass held a closed-door meeting with interior and local government secretary Ronaldo Puno inside Camp Crame.

New impeachment rap won't work, says solon

THE NEW IMPEACHMENT complaint against President Macapagal-Arroyo will not be entertained since this is covered by the one-impeachment, one-year ban, Quezon City Rep. Matias Defensor said yesterday.

"That will be accepted," Defensor, who chairs the justice committee, told the Arroyo-led Senate prosecution in Quezon City, referring to the complaint filed by lawyer Oliver Lozano.

He pointed out that the Constitution bars the filing of two impeachment complaints within a year.

He said that a new complaint may be filed only on Oct. 31, a year after the last complaint was lodged.

Defensor said Lozano's complaint would not even get past the office of House Secretary General Marilyn Yap.

But he said he had yet to read the contents to determine if it was merely a "sentence complaint."

Lozano filed the complaint last Tuesday based on the President's supposed admission in a radio interview that she knew that the ₱329-million Macapagal Broadband Network deal with China's ZTE Corp. was tainted by corruption.

Malacañang has denied that Mr. Arroyo made such an admission. TJ Burgonio

JUST MONITORING

Palace keeping an eye on protests

By Christine D. Avendaño and Aileen Papa

MALACAÑANG WILL BE KEEPING a watchful eye on tomorrow's protest actions and is ready to address any request from some junior military officers not to attempt another destabilization attempt against the government, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said yesterday.

"You can be sure the police and military are on their toes. This is not the first time we are hearing about this," he said.

But Ermita stressed that the authorities would not be up their grievances.

"We will just monitor how (many people they'll muster)," Ermita said.

Anti-government demonstrations are scheduled in Makati and at the Quezon ground shrine Edsa Shrine.

The police authorities said he cut those in keep peace and order and "not to do that they do not go to (prohibited places)," Ermita said, adding that they also want to prevent the rallies from being infiltrated by troublemakers.

School requirement

Ermita expressed confidence over reports that some schools were requiring their students to attend the planned rallies. He said he had heard that some parents were unhappy appeals on that their children would not be forced to join these rallies.

At a press conference in Camp Crame yesterday, the Philippine National Police (PNP) admitted that the recent political unrest was the reason they asked for a postponement of the arraignment of detained Sen. Antonio Trillanes and 28 soldiers held in Makati court facility.

"Our request for postponement was based on the security assessment of the prevailing situation," PNP Spokesperson Senior Supt. Marissa Bitas-Banez said.

"In security preparedness, we consider all options," he said, adding that "it is not a good manner to bring out (high-profile) personalities from detention to attend court hearings on those days...so we said in order that it be scheduled at a later date."

In the same breath, however, he denied that Trillanes and his group joined any dinner or specific caucus. He alleged it was Arar to think Trillanes and company would stage a repeat of their Nov. 29 coup d'etat-cum-rest and Manila Peninsula siege.

Reminiscent talked to media shortly after the PMP's top brass held a closed-door meeting with interior and local government secretary Ronaldo Puno inside Camp Crame.

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Teves is bypassed; Jamby is outraged

SOME OFFICIALS FACING CHARGES, most in the dreaded congressional Committee on Rules, are unfazed as they are lucky while some are plain unlucky.

Take Pasay City Rep. Marguerite Trenas who was bypassed for the umpteenth time yesterday prompting his father, former congressman Herminio Teves, to advise his son to quit.

On the other hand, Cal. Ernesto Sadiarin, the secretary of the Cabinet, is suffering a series of setbacks since the 2007 elections that almost derailed the election of deposed Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV's protégé GA senator, ending up with a promotion to brigadier general.

Then resigned Sen. Jamby Madrigal, a known supporter of Trillanes who has vigorously defended Sadiarin's appointment, who failed to stave her opposition before Senate President Manny Villa hanged the panel affirming the promotion of Sadiarin and 31 other military officers.

Accusing her Senate colleagues of "sleight of hand and trickery," Madrigal angrily demanded that Sadiarin's promotion be recalled.

Madrigal said she failed to appear her objection because she did not hear Rep. Rodolfo Alfonso III send out Sadiarin's name.

Alfonso insisted that he mentioned Sadiarin's name and he was supported by other GA members like Sen. Richard Gordon who asked Madrigal to be "more attentive, more alert" during hearings.

Gordon noted that Villar had asked Madrigal if she wanted to make an objection before he banged the gavel but the lady we did not make one.

Villar blamed the snafu on "miscommunication" but said it was already too late to recall Sadiarin's promotion.

Madrigal said she would make a formal protest and planned to invoke Section 23 of Commonwealth Act 408 which allows any member to block an appointment. She also objected to having too many generals removed from the retired ranks.

There was no surprise in the case of Trenas as many of GA members are determined to oppose the Pasay mayor's appointment.

Teves' father, who accused GA members of demanding payoffs from nominees, was furious at the way legislators took turns trashing his son for not-said-a-bull issues.

"Ako (should) just resign," said the elder Teves.

The other military officers who were promoted were Helen Allego to lieutenant general; Generoso Ebreo and Ferdinand Eslao to rear admiral; Samuel Morales, Rey Leal, Ramon and Alexander Florencio to major generals; Generoso Ebreo and Ferdinand Eslao to vice admiral; Samuel Morales, Rey Leal, Ramon and Alexander Florencio to major generals; Antonio Nafarrete and Ernesto Clemente to brigadier general; Elmo Cabanban to commodore and Benjamin Pelo, Primo Pulias, Amelio Depalobillos, Bartolomeo Pascual, Nestor Melgazo, Jeff Vasco, Feodicio Ramirez, Reynaldo Mamaggay, Jullano Gaviola, Oscar Isorena, Elvis Hermogenes, Onofre Tolentino, Renato Condrigan, Edmundo Cortes and Virgilio Garcia to colonel (RFC Gobuyen, gen.ph

To catch a thief, according to Erap

CONVICTED PLUNDERER EX-PRESIDENT Joseph Estrada yesterday took issue with the position taken by the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines' bishop President Macapagal-Arroyo to lead the search for truth in the NBN-ZTE scandal.

"It is like asking a thief to catch a thief," Estrada said in a phone interview.

He said it was impossible to ask the President to lead the search for truth when she was in the middle of the controversies circling her administration.

Estrada also said the resignation of the President was not the call of the bishops but of the people and said he would support people power if the Arroyo blocked moves to impeach her.

On Wednesday, the CBCP declared that the search for truth must be pursued relentlessly and urged the President to allow her officials to reveal any corrupt practices in the ₱329-million NBN-ZTE deal by abolishing her counter-second Executive Order 464.

Amelyn R. Ily

'Study now, come and get me later'

By Jerry E. Esplanada

THE "STUDY NOW, PAY LATER" program of the Commission on Higher Education for indigent college students is being hampered by poor loan repayment.

Of the more than P1bn subsidy in loan payments due from some 30,000-plus poor college students under the program, the CHEd has collected only a little over P800,000, or a very low 3 percent of the total.

As a result, "other qualified indigent students are deprived of the loan and the opportunity to pursue higher education," according to the Commission on Audit (COA).

In a report to CHEd acting chair Romulo Neri, COA blamed CHEd's "ineffective monitoring system" for the low repayment rate.

"[The loan payment] collection rate will never improve as repayments of these old, delinquent loans will not be collected from program grantees. As returns of the program funds are minimal, allocation of their limits the extension of benefits to deserving and qualified students," COA noted.

The COA urged CHEd to "take appropriate action to intensify collection of due and demandable accounts" and "monitor the employment status of students graduates."

"If grantees are already employed, CHEd should enforce the provision in the program's rules and regulations relative to the garnishment of their salaries," COA said.

Asked in comment, Neri yesterday admitted that "it's almost impossible to collect from that type of loan."

"Even in the United States they also have very poor experience in loan payment collections," Neri told the Inquirer.

Citing CHED records, the COA said in three of the country's 16 regions alone, "due and demandable loans (had) reached P26,377,340 with collections of merely P647,864.75."

"This low collection performance is attributed to the absence of an effective monitoring system in the CHEd regional offices," said COA.

BIR blocks forfeiture of Jose Velarde funds

By Jocelyn R. Uy

THE SANDIGANBAYAN'S Antigraft court in Quezon City has ordered the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) to temporarily stop the forfeiture in favor of the government of the P1.2 billion in assets linked to Jose Velarde, the alleged mastermind in the P728-million fertilizer fund scam.

The Third Division of the court issued a temporary restraining order (TRO) on Tuesday, effective for 72 days, to prevent the BIR from implementing its Feb. 15 order to forfeit the assets of Velarde, his wife Imelda and their children.

The court also directed the BIR to explain why it should not be permanently prohibited from implementing its order.

The court issued the TRO after Velarde's lawyers filed a petition for certiorari, prohibition and mandamus with prayer for the issuance of a TRO and writ of preliminary injunction.

Velarde's lawyers argued that the BIR had no jurisdiction to issue the forfeiture order because the Sandiganbayan had already issued a writ of sequestration over the assets.

They also said the BIR had violated Velarde's right to due process when it issued the forfeiture order without giving him the opportunity to present his side.

Velarde is facing plunder charges before the Sandiganbayan for allegedly amassing ill-gotten wealth through the misuse of the fertilizer fund.

He is also facing graft charges before the Ombudsman for allegedly receiving kickbacks from the fertilizer fund scam.

Velarde's lawyers said the BIR's forfeiture order was "highly irregular" because it was issued without the benefit of a hearing.

They said the BIR's action violated Velarde's right to due process because he was not given the opportunity to present his side.

The lawyers also

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REFRESHING
LIKE COKE
A COKE EXACTLY
LIKE COKE
BUT WITH
ZERO SUGAR
Coca-Cola
zero
REAL COKE TASTE.
ZERO SUGAR.
GET READY TO BE
ZEROED.

Madriaga: Where will I go for safety?

By Cynthia D. Balana

Please pass

Guyanzon's staff passed the burden of escorting Madriaga to Sen. Panfilo Lacson, according to Cuta.

At a former Senate witness himself, Cuta said she was slighted by the statement of the former chief of staff of Guyanzon, who said, "We're not one witness."

"The Senate should protect him. He should not be left to his own devices because his could be easily killed for talking against the President and the First Gentleman," Cuta said.

Nara to the rescue

It was at the moment of confusion that the name of Daughters of Charity and of St. Scholastica came to the minds of the new witness. The nuns were touched. Hinds legs but Bono was still ecclesiastic rebate he would be taken.

Then a certain Hotel Mansion refused to Guyanzon, who decided to allow Madriaga to stay in the Senate's holding room.

Some Manananggols sensed the safety of Madriaga's family, according to Cuta.

"His family also needs protection. Since their lives are also in danger," Cuta quoted Sister Mona Lacsina as saying.

Convoy to get Madriaga family

It was at this point that Cuta said she was decided to talk to Pantaleon to fetch Madriaga's family.

"We went on a convoy and the sisters volunteered to use their L-300 to fetch Madriaga's wife and children. We picked the family when we saw the house," Cuta said.

The Madriaga house is modest without a maid so that the family was one affluent, according to Cuta.

When the group arrived at almost 10 in the evening, the house was totally dark and the gate was locked, Cuta said.

Madriaga's wife Aileen came out of the house when Cuta opened her door after asking with the sisters were already outside of the house.

Lights switched on

It was only at this point that the lights were switched on and Aileen and her children realized is the door. The youngest of the seven children, aged 4 years old, was already asleep when Cuta's group arrived.

Cuta said Madriaga's wife apologized to the sisters and explained that it was for security reasons that the lights had been turned off.

Cuta said she asked Aileen to bring clothes for her husband, who was staying in the Senate, at least for that night.

Aileen, in her rush to pack, grabbed an old golf bag and stuffed clothing and aileen accessories inside but her husband, "Flip-flops and toiletries were just too much bag. She was not really prepared for it," Cuta said.

Fears Pantaleon the family of the new witness was taken somewhere in Manila while Cuta called it a night at 12:30 a.m.

Walk-in witness

How Madriaga became a walk-in witness in the Senate shows that he is a man who was moved to tell the truth about the broadband deal to unload, according to Cuta.

Cuta said she had heard about Madriaga but did not know him from Adam.

It was Cuta who accompanied Madriaga to the Senate on Tuesday but she said it was not because Madriaga was a witness of the opposition, particularly Lacson.

Cuta noted that before Madriaga's surprise appearance in the Senate, Lacson had confessed the media about Madriaga's intention to and said that he could be a good witness.

Cuta said it was this statement by Lacson that made Madriaga decide to go straight to the Senate and relay to all the information he knew about the broadband deal.

Madriaga's only request to Cuta was to see Lacson first to clear his name.

"He told me, 'Senator Lacson deserved my name to media by saying that I am a good witness. But the senator could help to clear my name by letting me speak in the Senate on his own volition,'" Cuta said.

Gauging credibility

It was only on Monday that Cuta received a go-signal from Lacson to meet with Madriaga with the sole purpose of gauging his intentions and credibility.

The meeting between Cuta and Madriaga was arranged by a female columnist from a daily newspaper, not the lawyers, and took place at a restaurant in Greenbelt 3 in Makati.

Cuta said she foresees that as a witness who testified in a legal investigation is a personal asset, she was curious to know what Madriaga had to say.

"When we met and I heard his story, I asked him 'Mr. Madriaga, are you really sure that your are telling the truth, because if you made up the story you would be destroying yourself,'" Cuta said.

She said he also asked Madriaga why it was only now that he was coming out.

Madriaga said he had been afraid because his name had been floated on the Internet and because he feared for the safety of his family and his seven children, according to Cuta.

Fears the beginning

In his Senate testimony, Madriaga said he knew from the very beginning that Ike Presidente and his husband, Jose Miguel Arroyo, were part of the "Diversity Group plan also" that included Leo San Miguel (he was under of Home Cables related police official Quirino "Bomb" de la Torre, Rodney Reyes and former Commission on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos Jr.

After meeting with Madriaga, Cuta told Lacson of her initial impression and assessment. Then Lacson agreed to meet Madriaga.

According to Cuta, Lacson tipped off a Senate reporter of a TV network about the meeting with Madriaga, thus, the exclusive interview with the network before the Senate hearing.

After the meeting with Lacson and the interview with the TV network, Cuta offered to bring Madriaga to his home but Madriaga insisted that she just drop him off to a place where he could take a passenger jeepney.

No food for the kids

While in her car, Madriaga according to Cuta received a text message from his wife who told him, "wala nang pangpabaon (no more food for lunch)" and sought permission if she could sell the family's van to prop up the could buy food for the kids.

Cuta said that broke her heart and insisted that Madriaga take her P5,000. "At first he did not want to accept it but when he opened his wallet, I saw he only had P200. So I pitied him. I borrowed that he take the P5,000," she said.

Before she dropped off Madriaga on Leviste Street in Makati, Manila, Cuta said he appealed to her not to forget about his testifying the following day.

The next day Madriaga on his cell, Cuta said he was ready to go to the Senate as early as 6:30 a.m. as a text message.

Coffee shop

They were supposed to meet on the same street where she left him on Monday but according to Cuta, she decided that it was best for them to meet in a different place but still near the area.

"She wanted for me at a coffee shop in a hotel," Cuta said.

When they finally reached the Senate shortly after a late breakfast, Cuta said she discreetly told the Senate guards not to ask for an ID from her companion because he may be a surprise witness.

During breakfast, Cuta said she decided to take Madriaga to the Senate lounge along with officer in the Senate and Senator Senate witnesses.

As a former witness, Cuta said she was committed to support Madriaga even if the female Otso or the Senate blue ribbon committee would not provide him any security.

"I know that is not the case. That is my belief and as a former witness myself, I hope that the office of Senator Guingona will eventually take full responsibility for the security of Madriaga. Like Lozada, his life is in real danger," Cuta said.

But, Joker Arroyo questioned why the Senate had to provide lodging for Madriaga.

"I didn't know there is a room-y here. I didn't know that they have the Hotel Diana Senate," Arroyo said with a laugh. "There's a lot of drama, just drama such opinions."

Chinese Embassy calls Madrigal's statement 'extremely irresponsible'

By Cynthia D. Balana

THE CHINESE EMBASSY IN Manila yesterday chided opposition Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV's "deadly" blindfold he dragging it into the controversy on the $329-million National Broadband Network deal between the government and China's ZTE Corp.

The statement, released by Wang Chao, the embassy's deputy chief of the political office and spokesperson, referred to Madrigal's remarks during Tuesday's Senate hearing on the scrapped deal where she asked why the Chinese Embassy was "communicating with or representing to PGP."

Madrigal, who was referring to President Macapagal-Arroyo's husband, Mike Arroyo, went on to say that this implied "collusion between PG and a foreign nation's ambassador."

ZTE is 50-percent owned by the Chinese government.

"When former Madrigal said doesn't tally with the facts. Such remarks are extremely irresponsible," Peng said.

Asked to elaborate, Peng said the embassy had nothing more to say.

"I hope you can understand. If there are any statements, we will call the media. But right now, that is our only statement. We don't want to create any misunderstanding," Peng told the reporters in an interview.

Madrigal said she was "saddened by the assertion of the Chinese Embassy."

"We dare to be the Filipino people. It is in the interest of both the Filipino and Chinese people that we know out the truth," she said in a press statement.

Soldiers in Jolo massacre cleared

ZAMBOANGA, CITY—MILITARY ARMY prosecutors yesterday cleared dozens of soldiers accused of killing eight people in Jolo during a raid against Islamic militants, the military said.

The military suspended more than 50 soldiers earlier this month after seven civilians and a government soldier were killed in a raid on a remote village in Jolo Island, where Islamic militants of the Abu Sayyaf group could be hiding.

Military commanders had said the operation targeted militants and that those killed, including two children and a pregnant woman, were caught in the cross fire or were shot by the gunmen as they fled.

The deaths were condemned by human rights advocates, and the mayor forced the military to carry out an investigation.

But the Judge Advocate General's Office (Jag) in the southern Philippines ruled the soldiers were innocent of murder in the Feb. 4 firefight.

"It was a legitimate encounter with the Abu Sayyaf and that is according to the report and findings of the Jags," said Army Major Eugene Kasan, regional military spokesman.

Jose Manzong, an official with the Independent Commission on Human Rights, rejected the ruling.

"None of them was an Abu Sayyaf member. Seven civilians and a government soldier were killed in that attack," Manzong said.

Manzong said findings by human rights investigators showed the soldiers attacked the village, then robbed the houses of the civilians. He has also endorsed the filing of criminal charges in ordinary courts against the soldiers. AFP

Police radio show launched in Marawi

By Cynthia G. Balane

A UNITED KINGDOM-ASSISTED PUBLIC relations and information campaign aimed at allowing local policemen to reach out through the airwaves of Marawi and neighboring towns was launched last week in Manila as part of the overall integrated transformation program of the Philippine National Police.

The AM radio chat show "Kalasan Palis Marawi" involves the police, community leaders, media practitioners and the general public, and intends to highlight its services, generate feedback to improve police services, and strengthen police accountability.

The radio show is a component of a Community Policing Project in the crime- and conflict-ridden municipalities of Marawi.

It was inspired by British experience of mobilizing community members to help in protecting their own communities in crime prevention and maintaining peace.

British Ambassador Peter Buckingham said the community policing was being implemented worldwide and has achieved some success in reducing conditions where the spread of the local militant and good community relations are critical.

"A community-focused police force is an effective deterrent to the efforts of various armed groups, gangs, or militants to engage in the business of protection by scaring free-running local communities," Buckham said.

He said the model has taken off in Iraq (Basra Province), Bosnia-Herzegovina, Sierra Leone, Kosovo, and currently in Afghanistan (Helmand Province and Mazar-el-Sharif).

According to the British embassy the ARMM Community Policing Project has established a model police station that will increase access to justice by improving law enforcement capabilities, boosting the morale and welfare of personnel, and improving the quality of services rendered at the police station level.

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Palace legal team considers junking Executive Order No. 464

Presidential Legal Counsel Sergio Apostol, Deputy Executive Secretary for Legal Affairs Manuel Luna, and Governance Corporate Legal Counsel Alberto Agra.

"We are to be sure that this will be presented to the President very soon because what is most important is a matter coming from the CBCP Pro[illegible] that the President will be properly guided by a recommendation [illegible] legal team," Ermita said yesterday.

EO 464 bans government officials from testifying in congressional inquiries without the President's permission.

After a special meeting on Tuesday, the CBCP issued a pastoral statement calling for, among other things, the abolition of EO 464 "in that those who might have knowledge of any corruption in government may be free to testify before the appropriate investigating bodies."

Ermita said among the cases to be discussed by the legal team were those "up in the air," including Commission on Higher Education Chair Romulo Neri's participation in the Supreme Court's stop-and-frisk search at the Senate building. Neri is refusing to answer questions on the scrapped Philippine National Broadband Network (PBN) deal with China's ZTE Corp.

Testimony executive order

But former Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban pointed out that officials of the executive branch summoned to attend congressional hearings were no longer invoking EO 464.

"All they're [invoking] is executive privilege," Panganiban told reporters in a chance interview during yesterday's farewell meeting for retiring Associate Justice Angelina Sandoval-Gutierrez.

"Executive privilege is not provided for by EO 464. That is in the Constitution," he said.

"I'm afraid there is not much significance [in scrapping it] because it's a worthless executive order right now. The remaining provisions do not protect anybody anymore in the present executive document," he added.

Panganiban now writes a column for the Inquirer. It was under his tenure as Chief Justice that the high court struck down the original provisions of EO 464.

The Senate inquiry into the NBN-ZTE deal was delayed in September last year when Neri invoked executive privilege in refusing to answer questions on what Ms Arroyo told him after he reported to her an alleged bribery attempt by then Commission on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos Sr.

Neri was ordered arrested by the Senate early this year after he ignored a summons for him to show up at the Senate inquiry.

He sought relief from the Supreme Court, which ordered the lifting of the arrest order while his case was under deliberation.

Panganiban said the appropriate procedure would have been "for President invoking executive privilege for him (Neri)."

He said he had earlier stated that "certain parameters" had to be observed by both Congress and the executive department.

Panganiban also said the rule in the invocation of executive privilege was transparency and disclosure.

Delineating parameters

"The exception is secrecy," he added. "In other words, the burden of proof to show why secrecy should be upheld lies with the executive department [because] the rule is disclosure."

Solicitor general Clod Justice Antonio Perez, the petition filed by Neri with the Supreme Court will "delineate the parameters" of the doctrine of executive privileges.

"The Neri case will determine which communications of the President can be considered part of executive privilege," Perez told reporters on the sidelines of an international conference on press freedom yesterday at the Peninsula Manila Hotel in Makati City.

The Chief Justice said the high court had previously recommended the doctrine of executive privilege as enumerated, which even the President could not disregard.

But the limits of such a doctrine have yet to be determined, he said.

Under Article VI, Section 22 of the Constitution, heads of departments may on their own initiative, with the consent of the President, or on the request of the House or the Senate, appear before and be heard by the chamber on any matter pertaining to their departments.

Written questions shall be submitted to the Senate President or the Speaker of the House at least three days before the invited officials' scheduled appearance.

Interpellation shall not be limited to written questions, but may cover related matters. When the security of the state or public interest so requires, and the President so states in writing, the appearance shall be conducted in executive session.

Careful study

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said scrapping EO 464 would require careful study because there are laws and jurisprudence that have to be considered before we can come up with a decision.

He said the CBCP should understand that there were certain "parameters" to be considered, including information that would require confidentiality such as trade secrets and matters of national security.

He pointed out that the top-secret classification of some documents by a public officer was also punishable under Article 229 of the Revised Penal Code.

Road to Damascus

He said the President did not usually face law enforcement agencies when appearing at congressional investigations, but that Malacañang was concerned about the manners of the inquiries.

Asked to comment on the CBCP statement, Senate minority floor leader Lito Lapid said the bishops had their own reasons.

"I have an [idea] line is there except to issue who helped me with my discernment," he said smiling.

"We have to [balance] different issues. There are Pharisees, Sadducees and different kinds of religious leaders."

Lapid said that while the CBCP had its own "collective wisdom," he would continue to follow his own conscience by pursuing the truth and calling for precise actions.

The CBCP statement drew angry reactions from militant groups—including the Bayan Muna-led Makabayan (Bayan), Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) and Anakpawis—which described it as "naive," "absurd," "misleading" and "illogical."

Said Bayan secretary general Renato Reyes Jr: "While we welcome the bishops' appeal for a determined and relentless search for the truth and for [the President] to abolish EO 464, the CBCP owed yesterday in its assertion that she would allow key subordinates to reveal any corrupt acts, particularly about the ZTE-NBN deal."

Not enough grounds'

But Bayan Muna Party-list Representative Satur Ocampo said the CBCP statement, saying it was "a product of a prayerful and unified discernment."

Ocampo said the bishops did not call for resignation because it was a political action that was not within their competence.

He said the corruption allegations against Ms Arroyo had not been proven to warrant a resignation call.

But as Ms Arroyo's friend, Malacañang said, he could ask her to heed the CBCP call for the abolition of EO 464. With reports from DV Ilip, Dainin L. Lucas and Beverly Mendrildad

CBCP not stopping 'GMA resign' calls, say bishops

Ermita hopes people will follow bishops

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY Eduardo Ermita yesterday expressed elation that the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) did not call for Ms Arroyo's resignation.

"They are very discerning," he said of the bishops in his weekly news conference.

"At the head of the flock, they are being followed by the people," he said.

Asked whether Malacañang thought the political crisis would be defused by the CBCP statement, Ermita said this was what it hoped would be the outcome.

"Because the CBCP speaks for the majority of Filipinos, they have the guns of members," Reyes, also known as the "morning press," told the reporters on the phone.

Reyes said Makabayan did not want "another people power" and, thus, feared "great confusion in the bishops' diagnosis that another people power [would] weaken our democratic institutions."

Giving the CBCP's assertion of the pervading sources of corruption in its statement, Reyes said that if the rumor were really true, the alternative was "ultimate abrogation."

"The forces must go. The methods of taking it out may vary, but the ultimate goal is one and the same," he later said in a statement.

Not moral issue yet

But Archbishop Cruz said that though its statement, the CBCP has done its job of giving the pronouncements for Ms Arroyo's resignation.

For example, he said, the fact that the bishops pointed out that there was "corruption from top to bottom" spoke strongly against the administration's questionable moral authority.

"What else will you say after that? [Then Ms Arroyo's] please step?" Cruz said.

Asked whether Ms Arroyo's resignation was a particularly convenient issue in the deliberations, Bacani only said that early on, it was "done" in the bishops that they would "let the people decide on which course of action to take—to ask for resignation or not—but to seek the truth always."

Actually, Bacani said, the 55 bishops who attended the 10-hour special meeting were "not able to discuss or bought" the resignation issue.

He said the bishops were more interested in "getting [Ms Arroyo's] side on resignation or give us the truth."

Cabanatuan Bishop Diosdado Lilgaan said the CBCP would not call for Ms Arroyo's resignation "unless it becomes a moral issue."

"Now it is still [a] political [issue]. As long as it is political it does not call for resignation," Lilgaan said, adding that the allegations against moral issues were insufficient and unjustified.

In their guts

Reyes said, however, that the people were prescribing a cure for the cancer of corruption, but the bishops seemed to be "reluctant to diagnose, and much less prescribe."

"The experts, in this case the bishops, seem to diagnose the cancer at its earlier stages, implying that there is still time and therefore nothing to worry about," he said, adding:

"The immigrants, the ordinary Ig do not merely see but actually feel the very causes that is under discussion. The people of whom are poor, experience the causes in their very guts and souls.

"Behind a dark outside lurks and operates the anomalous regular eating on cycles that seems to bleed the exports, but, thank God, does not affect and does not smirch the purchase power.

"The people feel the causes. The people are in pain. They are suffering and dying from it. They know who, what and where the malignant tumor is. They have spoken. They have authority because they are the patients whose condition matters most. The people have spoken and continue to speak. The terror must go... the must reign..."

See, hear, do no evil

As the Apex and Soyo press bureau, Manchukuo coined different expressions.

"It's a cop-out," Sierra Bulja Rep. Teller Jones said of the CBCP pastoral letter. "It's a case of see no evil, hear no evil, do no evil. [The bishops] are blindly, they don't want to see. They're blind to the truth."

According to the independent lawmaker, the CBCP's pastoral letter only "added to the confusion" because the people need to believe the administration's alleged involvement in corruption and electoral fraud.

Jones said the bishops "should be the shepherd." However, he said, "in a sense, they don't want to lead."

"In the end, the military will make its move as an institution," he insisted.

But Manila Rep. Amado Bagatsing disagreed. Cagayan City Rep. Edelmar Delmar praised the CBCP.

"It's a more sober approach... The bishops voiced their true feeling: some manifested it by their presence. The division was unanimous," Bagatsing said. "The division will assert an agitation."

Bagatsing agreed, saying: "I think it's a very sober assessment. What the Church did was to respect the [consideration]."

Negros Occidental Rep. Ignacio Arroyo, the President's brother-in-law, rarely said: "The CBCP said they're not in favor of the resignation. That's good. I'm glad the CBCP has come up with a sober statement."

Downer

Opinion was likewise divided at the Senate.

Opposition Sen. Francis Escudero said the CBCP statement was a "downer" compared to the bishops' strong stance against Presidents Ferdinand Marcos and Joseph Estrada.

He reminded the CBCP that the corruption and election fraud issues stemming the Arroyo administration were the same issues made against the Marcos and Estrada administrations, which the Church had helped bring to ground.

But administration Senators Juan Arroyo and Juan Ponce Enrile welcomed the CBCP pastoral.

"The CBCP gives the political, sadly charged, atmosphere a welcome relief," Arroyo declared. "Let us heed their call for sobriety and discernment. It is the most balanced advisory that is needed at this time."

Enrile said the Church had been going beyond its traditional environmental role.

"That's their prerogative but ... personally I know that it was going beyond its role. The Church is not supposed to interfere in the government's political affairs," he said.

Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan said Filipinos should no longer rely on the Church to solve the latest political crisis.

"We cannot expect the Church to solve the country's political problems," Pangilinan said. "The Church is spearhead political initiatives. This will come from a new breed of political leaders, regardless with a new breed of active citizens," he said.

Deal to clarify

Expectedly, progressive party-list lawmakers were disappointed by the CBCP statement.

"It is unfortunate that the CBCP seems ... dead in the head dinner of people for 19th Archbishop to resign," said Gabriela Rep. Liza Maza.

"The CBCP statement is a disappointment. Is the CBCP compromising with evil?" she said in reference to Senate witness Rodolfo Lozada Jr.'s statement that former Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri had described Ms Arroyo as "evil." "Neri himself would not remember making the remark..."

Deputy Minority Leader Samuel Ocampo of Bayan Muna said that while the CBCP statement might be used by Malacañang to downplay the growing "resign" call, the same statement did not exonerate Ms Arroyo's people power accusers of change.

"Apparently, the bishops remain divided on the outright call for decisive political action already put forward by the politically advanced section of the people. The CBCP does profess its people to continue to reflect on their discernment of what is to be done, and the bishops would not disapprove of such an action," Ocampo said.

Madriaga to go through tests on credibility

From page A1

and validate what he has testified to. He knows a lot of details about the ZTE deal. If he is indeed a Trojan horse, this Trojan horse has been well trained. If he is just making it all up, he's good at faking," Villar said.

Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano said the blue ribbon technical working group would put Madriaga through a battery of questions to assess the substance of his testimony and to serve as a basis of whether to put him back on the witness stand next week.

Villar justified the tests on Madriaga. "We are doing this because we know that some parties who do not want the truth to come out will try to muddle the investigations," he said.

"When if a witness comes up with this riveting testimony but would later recant it and say that he was just paid to do it? That will derail the investigations," Villar said, adding that "nobody can just walk in the Senate and offer his testimony."

Cayetano said: "Right now there is no basis to not to believe him because there is no apparent falsity to what he is saying. We have not rejected his statements but we are not accepting them back, line and sinker."

Cayetano described Lozada was an intellectual, a technocrat who got involved in something very wrong. "But Madriaga by his own admission is part of the gang and the one doing the consolidation. He is said to sowing fear and not being scared," he said.

They don't know him

Asked whether he had ever met or worked with Madriaga, Lozada replied, "Not once."

"I don't know him," Lozada said. "He belongs to the Abalos group."

Commission on Higher Education Chair Romulo Neri, who was the socioeconomic planning secretary when the $329 million broadband deal was approved, believed he was not interested in the disclosures of Madriaga.

"I don't know Madriaga and I have never met him before," Neri told the Inquirer.

In Malacañang, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita led Palace officials in denying certainty by some senators that Madriaga was actually a Palace lackey.

"I don't know him," Ermita told reporters.

Communications Secretary Leandro Mendoza advised, sidelined though that Madriaga used to work at the DOTC during the term of former Secretary Jose Lina.

Mendoza said Madriaga was a project manager of the Telepono ng Barangay program.

Madriaga denied that he was out to sabotage the Senate investigation of the broadband deal, which has led to renewed calls for the President to resign.

"If I come out as someone not credible, I am not an actor. I did not rehearse ... If they doubt my credibility, I can't do anything about it anymore. I am not pleading for them to believe me," he said.

Texas university

In his unsigned affidavit, Madriaga said he studied for 2 1/2 years at the College of Engineering of the University of the Philippines. He transferred to the prestigious Texas A & M University where he obtained a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering in 1968.

He was hired as a consultant by the Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC) in 1999 for its Telepono sa Barangay, according to his affidavit.

He was an incorporator of Philippine Communications Clearinghouse Inc. along with Voltaire Abaniana and Leo San Miguel.

In 2003, he reportedly discredited Pacifico "Fic" Maercho, who oversaw President Macapagal-Arroyo of attempting to take over the telecommunications company for private gain.

From late 2004 to late 2005, he worked with Ayesseen, an American firm. He designed a broadband network, which Ayesseen submitted as a project proposal to the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda).

The Department of Interior and Local Government rejected the $130-million Ayesseen project proposal called Connect.

Designer of NBN

In May 2006, Madriaga was hired by ZTE where he headed the team that came up with a design for a National Broadband Network (NBN) project.

He was dismissed by ZTE in December 2006 allegedly on suspicion of passing information to Amsterdam Holdings Inc., the company of Jose de Venecia III, which also offered to materialize the project.

Madriaga said he still had to be paid more than P1 million for his technical services to ZTE. He said he had already been paid around P700,000 to P800,000. "I was promised that once the project is implemented, I will get paid from the savings," he said.

Pangilinan said he feared that some forces might want to undermine the integrity of the Senate hearings on the scrapped broadband deal.

"There will be problems of credibility if he suddenly turns back on his word claiming he was forced just like other witnesses before him. I hope I'm wrong," he said.

Speculative

Saying Madriaga's testimony was "speculative" and all "hearsay," Mendoza said the new Senate witness also made statements with loopholes.

He pointed to Madriaga's claim that ZTE paid $41 million in kickbacks to Mr Arroyo, her husband and a so-called "Gang of Four."

"We're evaluating how to get this money based on our computation on how much the project cost," Mendoza said as he noted that the claim of Madriaga was just "his imagination."

Mendoza said the DOTC was standing by its computation that the NBN project cost $329 million.

Partly hearsay

Sen. Francis Escudero noted both Lozada and Madriaga had given testimonies that were partly based on hearsay.

"You might notice that Senator Lacson usually is the one who knows or who has links to the witnesses which is why I think he is in the best position to judge him (Madriaga)," he said.

Villar said Madriaga himself admitted that he was just a "second floor" courier to the whims of the Gang of Four and not to the inner league as Lozada and De Venecia.

Cayetano said he and the two other heads of the joint panel investigating the scandal—Senators Mar Roxas and Rodolfo Biazon—were cautious about allowing Madriaga to just walk in and testify during the hearing on Tuesday because they did not know his background.

Cayetano said the committee chairs referred after Lacson, who previously accused Madriaga's agents of demanding P5 million for his testimony, personally endorsed his appearance.

But Lacson said more consultation was needed because he had on personal knowledge of most of what Madriaga had talked about. "He said a lot of things that were shocking and that jive with the circumstances," said Lacson.

Hearings resume next week

The NBN probe is scheduled to resume either on Thursday or Friday next week. "The Supreme Court will hear Neri's petition on executive privilege on Tuesday and we expect the court to make a decision to allow Neri to appear in the Senate," Cayetano said.

Cayetano said that the Senate would send out an invitation to former Commission on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos Sr. while issuing a subpoena to the other Gang of Four members—Sen Miguel, Pabon Reyes and Quirino de la Torre, and Abalos' man Friday Jimmy Ibe.

Cayetano said the joint panel was still studying how to summon ZTE officers to the Senate.

Lacson said that he had requested the Chinese Embassy for its government to conduct a parallel probe of the ZTE officials who took part in the giving of kickbacks to the Gang of Four.

Lacson said Madriaga's boss, San Miguel, would be the perfect witness to corroborate his testimony.

Immigration watch list

Lacson said San Miguel was still in the country but was reportedly scheduled to fly to Cambodia on March 5. "We have already requested the Bureau of Immigration to monitor the flying of Pepe's (depositor)," he said.

He said he had contacted San Miguel's friend, former Sen. Ramon Magsaysay Jr., to convince the Gang of Four member to come out and testify.

Lacson said he had also made a request to US Ambassador Kristie Kenney to revoke the US visa of Reyes, the alleged bagman of the group, and force him to come back to the country.

With reports from Darlene Cunanan, Jerry Esplanada and Inquirer Research

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Objectives

GMA 'agonized' over trip

From page A1

ideas tied to issue behind an ailing Jose Miguel Arroyo. One confided at the St. Luke's Medical Center, just to conclude the bloodbath deal.

In debriefing the President, Ermita had to inform the cronies leading to the President's attendance at the State Room for rest, food at the scenic town of Boracay Peninsula province.

It was Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile who personally sought Mr. Arroyo's permission as one of the principal speakers in the second plenary, which is the region's equivalent of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. Enrile said at a press conference in Malacañang.

Ramos forum cochair

"Since this would be my last year as cochair (of the forum), let it still be good if the President or my country will be the speaker of Boao forum," Enrile said, recalling his conversation with Ramos.

Mr. Arroyo "readily accepted the invitation" earlier because Ramos had been traveling around the world to promote the Philippines.

But when the President's husband was confined at the hospital, "President Arroyo asked me to see President Ramos if she could be excused from attending the forum. I could sense (the difficulties of PVR (Ramos). He was the one who put the program together. He made sure that President Arroyo ... is his. I is the talking in that forum."

Witness to agony

Ramos, he said, suggested that Mr. Arroyo could still push through with the trip by squeezing her activities into 12 hours.

"I was a witness to how the President was agonizing on the decision that she has to make," Enrile said.

Mr. Arroyo eventually decided to fly to China on an ten-to-two-hour-and-seven-hour-and-ten-hour-and-two-hour-and-ten-hour-and-two-hour-and-ten-hour-and-two

Salonga files plunder case versus GMA

From page A1

arraign for justice" by signing the deal.

Enrile said the commissioners appointed Mr Arroyo were "impeachable officers" but that he was not requesting the administration-controlled House of Representatives to move against her.

The two Salonga groups based their case on the President's March 23, 23 interview with the Inquirer (INQ, 3/24), in which she admitted that the $329-million National Broadband Network (NBN) deal with China's ZTE Corp. was flawed, and on the Senate testimony of former National Economic and Development Authority head Romulo Neri.

Neri, one of the witnesses at the Commission on Higher Education, told senators last month that he had informed Mr Arroyo of a $200-million bribe attempt by former Commission on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos for him to approve the NBN contract.

"Despite the foregoing knowledge," Mr Arroyo "did not stop or suspend the deal, let alone order its investigation," Salonga said.

Canceled after Senate expose

She "instead went on to authorize and sanction the signing of the NBN-ZTE agreement between Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza and ZTE Corp. Vice President Yu Yong," he added.

According to the complaint, the President "proceeded to personally witness" the signing on April 21, 2007 in Boao, China, a day after she came to know of the anomaly.

Mr Arroyo cancelled the contract only on Sept. 22, 2007, or "five months after her having known of the anomaly and her having witnessed the signing of the deal, and only after the Supreme Court had ordered its implementation to be temporarily stopped, after the Senate exposed the scandal," it said.

Ellenbogan and Bantay Kawatasan urged the Ombudsman to immediately investigate the President.

Salonga cited Section 12, Article 11 of the 1987 Charter, which mandates the Ombudsman to "act promptly on complaints filed in any form or manner against public officials or employees of the Government or any subdivision, agency or instrumentality thereof, including government-owned or -controlled corporations."

Guilty of treason?

In 2006, he said, the outgoing body also investigated a taking President when then Ombudsman Aniano Desierto ordered a probe of the graft charges filed against President Joseph Estrada.

Asked if Mr Arroyo could be held for treason if proven that she accepted a bribe from the Chinese firm as alleged by ZTE consultant Jomo Mahlinga in the Senate hearing on Tuesday, Salonga said it would be difficult to stick to that charge under the present circumstances.

He said the treason charge was possible if another witness could corroborate Mahlinga's claim that ZTE advanced $61 million to the President and her husband for the controversial project.

2 witnesses needed

"Treason ordinarily requires two witnesses over time. We do not have two witnesses here," Salonga said.

Mahlinga's statement did not hold much weight so far has not presented direct evidence, he said. "It is not enough. There is no direct evidence. I cannot give much importance to it."

Salonga said Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez should enlist herself from the case because of her ties to the Wint Family Gutierrez and First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo, who was implicated in the anomalous deal, "are close school classmates."

The framers meanwhile urged the inhibition of Deputy Ombudsman Orlando Casimiro because of Ellenbogan's and the Bantay Kawatasan "bad experiences" with him. Casimiro had ruled against their complaint against Comelec officials involved in the multi-million-peso computerization project.

Anybody but ...

"We are willing for a fair and impartial probe on the matter and we will ask the Ombudsman and his deputy to recuse from hearing the case. Anybody other than Gutierrez and Casimiro," Salonga said.

He said the Ombudsman investigation should point the way for a Saudi-produced plot against Mr Arroyo when her term would expire in 2013.

'FG' initials of Neda official ...

From page A1

subjects the guessing game over who.

Police officials denied that the initials "FG" found on the margins of a document relating to the National Broadband Network (NBN) project refer to the President's husband, Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo, who has been reportedly linked to the bribery-tainted and now scrapped $329-million NBN contract.

The margined note "copy for FG" which was pointed out by Biazon to the lawyer during the hearing on the NBN controversy allegedly reads "Copy for FG1/FG2." Trade Secretary Peter Favila maintained in a Malacañang briefing.

And "FG" stood for Fherdinand G. Ignilen and "FH" for Public Investment Staff of the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda), Favila said.

A statement from Neda, however, named the official as "Fherdee"—not Fherdinand—G. Ignilen, field of the discrepancy last night. Favila said he would defer to the Neda statement.

The number began on Tuesday when Madrigal produced a copy of a letter dated March 29, 2007 sent by then Neda Director General Romulo Neri to Chinese Ambassador Li Jiaxin.

The letter had Neri thanking the Chinese government for supporting the NBN and the Cyber Education Project, while urging China's Ministry of Commerce to give prompt and expedite necessary approvals relating to Cyberfil.

Madrigal said it was important to find out who the "FG" was on the margin of note, warning that a "troubling" situation would arise if it indeed referred to President Macapagal-Arroyo's spouse.

She said the Ilocos Congressman had no business being involved in the NBN project.

Real FG, according to Neda

But in a statement, the Neda said: "To set the record straight, the complete phrase handwritten on the upper right hand corner of the letter that Neda presents is 'copy for DG1/FG.' The initials 'FG' stand for Fherdie G. Ignilen while the acronym 'FH' refers to the Public Investment Staff of the Neda."

The Neda said Ignilen had been given a copy of Neri's letter to the Chinese ambassador because he headed PIS, a division that handles projects funded by loans from the Chinese government.

Reached on the phone, Ignilen said "the letter was really intended for us. The copy of the letter was given to us in line with the Cyberfil/Cyberfil project that we were supposed to monitor."

"Chairman Madrigal's staff should have first checked with the Neda before coming out with this issue," said Ignilen, who has been with Neda for more than 20 years.

Quoting his phone conversation with Neda Deputy Director Rolando Tungpalan yesterday, Favila said the Neda official observed that the letter was presented at the hearing apparently "with some undue because the letter T was conveniently erased."

Investigating leak

Favila also reported that, according to Tungpalan, the Neda had initiated an internal investigation concerning the apparently "leaked" letter.

"They are undertaking an investigation on how such a piece of paper was able to fall into the hands of some people without the authority of Neda," Favila said. "Is there a leak from within?"

The Neda had also begun tracing whose penmanship was on Neri's letter, Favila said, adding: "Was it anybody from Neda or someone from outside?"

Not me, says Neri

Adding to the mystery first, the letter's signatory denied that the handwriting on the margins was his.

"Why would I put 'copy for (First Gentleman's copy)'?" he told the Senate when presented to the memorandum. With a report from Jerry Esplanada

Government Warning:
Cigarette smoking is dangerous
to your health

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

To the rear, march!

EDITORIAL

THE IMAGE WAS UNSETTLING. THE TOP BRASS of both the military and the police marched down Edsa last Monday, arm linked together, in what various spokesmen called a "unity walk." The generals said they wanted to show unmistakable proof of their support for the constitutional process and their Commander-in-Chief; instead, they ended up causing doubts, in the public mind, about the quality of their commitment to democracy.

First things first. Gathering generals together in a show of force to prove loyalty to the chain of command and to express support for a president under siege is an old gambit, and an ineffective one. The dictator Ferdinand Marcos and the beleaguered Joseph Estrada both tried it, only to suffer high-level defections at the moment of greatest crisis. In other words, these shows of force do not prove anything. They do not prove that support once expressed cannot be withdrawn, or guarantee that no one will break ranks.

But we have always found these thing-squad assemblies of star officers disconcerting not because they don't work and are therefore a waste of time, but because they send the wrong message. Despite what they may say about the armed services' constitutionally ordained neutrality, the generals end up being "neutral for" the incumbent. In other words, and despite the generals' language distancing themselves from politics, these shows of force are political statements.

Consider the other groups who have staged unity walks or the public-relations equivalent in the last few days. Cabinet secretaries, administration congressmen, provincial governors—politicians all. So itself, but also to the context of other pro-administration shows of force, the generals' march down Edsa was decidedly political.

Can it ever be otherwise? When our democratic institutions come under great stress, shouldn't the armed services speak up in favor of the Constitution? Well, consider only one example from the recent history of a democratic ally: When the hanging chads of Florida pushed the United States to the brink of a constitutional crisis, did America's generals put on a show of force?

This is the problem of the generals' march down Edsa. The top brass, in the very act of distancing itself from the political turmoil, presented itself as a political force.

The march was doubly disturbing because it happened on hallowed ground, and it misappropriated symbols from our democracy's narrative of rebirth. Edsa is the smelling salt of the country's democratic restoration, and the last time military men and police officers crossed it in rapid-fring fashion was 22 years ago, when military rebels switched camps under the protection of the people themselves.

The rebels then, rescued from certain death and redeemed from history's oblivion by the emergence of People Power, linked arms with each other but with the people, too—a telling detail missing from the generals' unity walk. The people then, seen in the thick of things—unlike the generals' march the other day, when they were reduced to mere audience.

In sum, the image was all wrong. Instead of making the armed services, especially the military, politically irrelevant (as they ought to be in a mature democracy), the generals' march reminded us that under the Arroyo administration the military has in fact been effectively politicized. Indeed, after the army mutiny, retired Vice Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon marched right into the Tl studios to deliver highhanded pronouncements about politicians and public service. At one point, to one interviewer, he sought to contrast his three decades in patriotic military service with an Arroyo critic's lack of equivalent service—as though criticism were per itself an act of patriotism.

In true democracy, the role of the soldiers is like that of the teacher: they do their work here where they are invisible, indeed when they make themselves dispensable. The generals' march down Edsa reminded us that the Philippine polity has no true growing up to do.

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Resurgent phrase

VIEWPOINT

Joaquin L. Bernardo

THE PHRASE HAS SURFACED AS SWIFT, fleet "People Power" is on every user's lips—from Malacañang which touts it like a boxing-ring symphony of Ridiculous accessories, who huddled in safe houses, while People Power 1 left embarrassed.

There's been an upsurge (more footages and photos). An outpouring of memories (different). What do people during People Power? Lots of parents.

Apprehensive and anxious stayed (no GIDO that Fr. James Reuter, S.J. "frustrated." The Recamp folks—you, Eddie Bumble? God pi-bless Enrique, Perfecto! Mercy D. rowed on a Pilipo bandido that they would fig it. The next evening, the Marcoses and cronies scrambled aboard escape choppers.

"Where I saw that massive crowd barricading the Edsa highway," thought I am now crowned the Queen of Peace, "Pilipino" Joaquin "Chino" Roces wrote. Borrowed in the line from Shakespeare Hail, Joseph Estrada wasn't impressively royal to be crushed.

Will come, time again is what the Guardian calls the "Generation of the Four Peace". That's an idea. But many people power pulpit have unhappy endings.

Recently, jams enrolled the powerful "Edifice Rex" (not Buddhist mumbo-jo) in Zimbabwe. Robert Mugabe's ants-cronies stolen and gag the media. Inflation rages at 100,000 percent. But lacking a cunning mural leader, people power fizzled.

That experience resonates in a-nails. "The chance to bring me the truth in this ZTE scandal should be supported initially by scrapping the senseless Executive Order 464," senior businessman Hector Rodrigo S. "But the inertia resistance seen's establish mail."

The incompetents (senators) have political agendas. The probe is chaired by Sen Pete Cayetano—a biased antiadministration. And senators Revilla and Pimentel are Erap's people. Impartice though they are—until we find a leader who—we must rely on our courts to force the truth.

Corruption is a cancer that apparently has the stores of time school to remember. GMA's supporters from their school, my numbered acquaintances told me, are in fact just a handful whose staff-occupants has risen in direct proportion to the popularity of their bosses. Some have become kitchen accountants in Malacañang. And their workhorse support of her in public is matched only by their devious consultations about her successor. The Arroyo critics, on the other hand, those Ramon Revs. Their motive is by disappointment, they said, no longer worse epithets than "evil" more than naturally incorrupt.

That reminded me, I said, of what I saw on TV, which was one of GMA's huddled, hunched, and troubled, quite apart from favorite confessional, friends befriending her as death on TV by saying, "GMA evil? That's like calling me a prostitute!"

What can one say? One more can't cure.

Last Monday, I saw a lot more sure and soldiers than I have since martial law. I saw them in abandoned scenes. I saw them in occupied streets, and I saw them, men and even of them, at the Edsa Shrine.

The cops would have put the crowd at the shrine in only 900. What's in a figure. There was more than that at the Mass alone. Certainly there was more than that an hour later when the groups coming from Cubao (which converged on Nowal through the Quezon Ave pan-up and joined the Mass goers. In my mind, I would put the crowd at 5,000.

Proof of it was that the cops immediately moved in to cut re-Cojuan down, fearful that would get bigger. The estimate of 500 more properly applied to the cops, enough even than to cordon the entire shrine. They overpowered more than that. Certainly, they came to relieve the crowd, left the shrine as much to farmers to attend a counter-show, I saw none. Before we could leave, I saw the cops were now a couple of times for a phalanx of fully-shielded cops carrying truncheons. Meanwhile, truckloads of soldiers, Scout troops, and cops in patrol cars, all armed with assault rifles, kept rumbling by. And a whole army squatted on the shrine steps all set for crowd battalion.

Given the cops' expressed efforts to overdisperse, that 5,000 at the Shrine was a victory unto itself. It proved that the Edsa Shrine can, and ought to, be revisited—at the moment people like most. The shrine is our shrine, it is ours.

I remembered that GMA had not said the morning she would not resign because the people needed leaders who—we have to do people. I wondered why leaders who were kind to the people were so badly scared of the people.

But it was Leo Romualdez-Benipayo who held the key to my question. For she was part of the group that had been wrapped by our circle way to the shrine and the two guns of the group that had been wrapped by cops on the way to the Arroyo. She exclaimed, "When's each day crossing? We are now bound down to the shrine. Prayer have been turned into crowding cops.

Cocoyoc Aquino is asking GMA to resign because she is corrupt, she knows she is corrupt, but more she is asking GMA to resign because she is corrupt, because she knows she is corrupt. Because she knows that she is corrupt and she Catholic enough to ask GMA to resign because she can help fight the corruption? That has got to be the joke of the century.

Of course, the bishops do not see Malacañang lies at the heart of the corruption, but they figure GMA should be "sure of the presence" by removing the drug. That reminds you of Ronald Reagan, a staunch Western ally, insisting that the Marcos was "sure of the cure" and should be kept even as the entire Philippines, including the US base Clark and Subic, was burning for our and cure—itself, mainly to channel they did not particularly cure. Reagan, of course, made Reagan irrelevant. It will do the same to more of our bishops.

The bishops' position only rebels irony and grotesque meanings to the saying, "It takes a thief to catch a thief." But GMA's corruption goes beyond the theft of money to the theft of the people's memory of the time they lived in relative civil world in blind and can no longer free that gaining voice following Christ? We have a "culture of truth," they say. Was, but now there is that culture of lies, and the bishops are among them easily. Where the very conscience needed to love someone to the truth can no longer see the truth, or love the truth, or smell the truth, or touch the truth, or hear the truth, or even recognize truth, or hear someone. We Catholic bishops are the very opposite for this country in agriculture, in healthcare, in school.

There is one thing worse than the corruption of the land, and that is the corruption of the soul. There is one thing worse than the corruption of the heart, and that is the corruption of the Church.

Of Gore to right: The hardest people to convince about inconvenient truths, however much those truths are and however they their efforts have been, are those whose paychecks make them want to see he-see-see.

The Holy Church of God has been corrupted by the Church of Arroyo—from Malacañang. The only thing I've seen about to all this is that some of GMA's most zealous defenders among the bishops said, "GMA evil?" That's like calling us prostitutes. That's hard to explain.

(E-mail: justthewords@gmail.com)

Mise en scene

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

At the Ateneo where I went to college, a couple of days ago, I was asked by some Grade 6 classmates, and said a resort-type thing about was reputedly behind the current spasms of Malacañang, about contemporaneity in fact were negotiations about the shipping of their favorite school being uncovered with someone who shares some of its values—being able to tell the truth, in a reasonable facsimile thereof, being chary of abuse. Some would like to have her ignore precedent and the dubious honor of having her for an abstract opened to my evidence from Dale Dale. (Thank apologies to Cole Dale.)

It's a reputation that apparently has the stores of time school to remember. GMA's supporters from their school, my numbered acquaintances told me, are in fact just a handful whose staff-occupants has risen in direct proportion to the popularity of their bosses. Some have become kitchen accountants in Malacañang. And their workhorse support of her in public is matched only by their devious consultations about her successor. The Arroyo critics, on the other hand, those Ramon Revs. Their motive is by disappointment, they said, no longer worse epithets than "evil" more than naturally incorrupt.

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(E-mail: justthewords@gmail.com)

Bishops as society's ballast

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cassayan

EPISCOPAL LEADERS SEE PLANES DIS-mayed by the refusal of the Catholic bishops' conference of the Philippines to join their chorus for the outright resignation of the President. The bishops' position, however, is understandable. They can see that their terse, "consensual action," has been treated by opposition groups to mean to call on another people power uprising, and they know that such an uprising would only weaken our democratic institutions. They strongly condemn the "culture of violence" that has emerged from the top to the bottom" of our society but they also refused to be stampeded into calling for EDSA: nature or resignation. Instead the prelates have pointed to peaceful means or "constitutional, democratic, proper and action" instead combining consensus, rather than engaging in politicking, as they insist on the search for the truth that would lead to the "healing of the nation, its institutions" and true stability for the country. The bishops prove once again that they are the bulwark of stability in our society.

* * *

Instead of remaining in the realm of exalted rhetoric, the bishops also called for the abolition by EMI of EO 464, perceived by many to be the main stumbling block to the search for the truth. The bishops are not averse to studying this suggestion seriously, though frankly I can't see it giving up executive privilege on cases. But at the same time, the bishops have pulled for a moratorium on rallies and Ombudsman as well as for the media to be a "positive resource in seeking the truth and combating corruption through objective reporting." The bishops are not blind to the fact that media hardly have become the source of a reverberated media policy of character assassin without the backing of evidence. Even the senatorial caucus so far specialized at this technique. Moreover, the fact that over 40 percent of all Senate investigations have on report to show makes one wonder what the point of all these interminable hearings in and what logic, other than media mileage, is behind the Senate's pursuit. On the ZTE issue alone, over 60 hours have been spent and the end is nowhere in sight. At one panelist suggested, somewhere the televised coverage and they'll end abruptly.

* * *

Many people I've talked to were plainly appalled that Senate witness Jesse Madrigal was allowed to claim that $11 million in ZTE "advances" were made to the Filipino group, $10 million of which he alleged to have gone to the First Gentle. This presented him. Else Hilario Lazo say that there ought to be a distinction between what was plain leeway and direct testimony. Madrigal's only direct testimony was his claim to have loaned the First Gentleman some $1 million. Lazo denied this. Ditto Chairman Senator Jinggoy Estrada at Wash Wash. The rest of what he said were plain leeway as he merely heard them from his boss, Lao San Miguel, who has yet to appear as the hearing.

* * *

I found it incredible that ZTE executive director Fun Yang would confide in Madrigal, a mere consultant, such sensitive information as the $11 million figure. Yet all indications are that people took half of the conspiracy. Would Yang have vouched against the interest of her own officer by divulging them to a foreigner? It would be like Madrigal telling Lao San Miguel's back. Like one of those Boers hanging around UD and nations officer, unlike Rodolfo Lozada Jr., whose image was completely retooled from that of a crook "full of holes" and a publican who had dealt with him in Hollister described him, to an innocent bodyguard shabby coddled by Gen. Ignatius and sister.

What remains salient in many minds is how Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile is that the hearings bear the marks of stage management by a most crafty producer, Sen. Noriffe Lucero, who revealed all the witnesses.

* * *

Opposition repeating is badly needed in these hyper-charged times. For instance, an assertion repeatedly made by the opposition and picked up by media, strikingly or not, is that GMA has been calling "mahirap" a hospital founded in by Ito Bono, China, on April 21 to reaffirm to die demand of Sen Yang, as Madrigal claimed, that GMA should show up there personally. The allegation is that the GMA is trying to divert Madrigal's to the "Greedy Group + 1," seen as important to her. In the interest of truth, since everyone is in search of it, perhaps a few facts might be in order.

Long before the ZTE crisis blew up, I had heard about the annual Boao Conference, which is to Asia what the World Economic Forum is to Davos, Switzerland. In the topic from former President Fidel V. Ramos, its co-founder and co-chair. At yesterday's press conference in Malacañang, Trade Secretary Peter Favila pointed out that it was FVR who suggested in February last year to our national leaders in that year, it would be good if GMA would be the main speaker at the April 2007 Boao gathering of international leaders. It turned out that GMA was in effect the only official who could immediately agreed to go to Boao and visit the other Chinese dates for a week.

Now the emergency surgery on Mike Arroyo came up in April 2007 and was ordered by no less than FVR about but not attending it. FVR, noting the international exposure for the Philippines, suggested that the just-make-a-quick-visit. In fact, he requested that GMA should leave on the night of April 20 and arrived in Boao in the wee hours. She delivered her speech that morning, flew a visit from G. Lido's doctors about Mike Arroyo's condition, returning to the island to have some dinner with Mike Arroyo's family, and then flew back to Manila. The arguing of four days, including the ZTE and the F.G. hello MOA, which were timed for her to witness during that trip, had to take place "postponed" for the duration of the Boao visit itself. Little did anyone know then those five minutes would eclipse GMA's speech in Boao!

Breakout

I'D LIKE TO WRITE ABOUT MY ABSORPTION FOR PEOPLE like Rodolfo Noel Lozada Jr., who, despite his fear of testifying before the Senate and despite the desperate attempts of influential people to control him, mustered the courage to reveal what he knew, even if it also meant admitting his own guilt.

I'd like to explain my disgust with the people behind Lozada's short disappearance, the stirring heroics and tearful admissions among some pinoy desk documents, ending up repeating declarations in part of a recent op-ed. I find it very puzzling that Malacañang thinks we are so ill-informed as to believe these heartbreaking stories.

I'd like to write how much I detest people who only think of themselves, assuming that the extraordinary ZTE deal pushed through, more or less, people would only have to tell their families while waiting for their billion-peso kickbacks. I hope they visit the slums around the country and see that a large majority of the children live out in all.

I'd like to write about my dismay with the Cabinet members who threaten to resign alone. I have no idea what's keeping him from walking from it. Where the time comes that he finally finds the guts to speak out, whatever he may have to say, I will appreciate it greatly.

I'd like to write about my disappointment with someone who used to be an honorable man, and who is now a mantelt defender of an undeniably corrupt administration.

I'd like to write how I find it ridiculous that President Macapagal-Arroyo dropped the Philippine military leadership Alexis Romero citing because of an unconfirmed plot. Does president-go dead-drones all the time? How funny was the alleged planner, the female Islamiyah, cautiously left down downstairs in a parking lot? How amusing that on the day of the 19th Anniversary of EDSA, there were not of many, any many Malacañang's capacity to produce incredible excuses and become pieces of evidence to impeach.

How I wish to expound on the issues involving armed premature government officials. But a simple reminiscence of those issues would already fill a book. There the starting will involve a much longer piece.

As I'll tell you tomorrow but while I answer one of those fleeting realities at the theater or on Radio Veritas, my eyes is just as serious. I'll tell you that between the pressures of academic deadlines and having a life, I still find time to sit down and peruse the national dailies every day. Every day, my eyes emerge every time I read and watch the news. I am getting more and more distressed. For the very first time in my 20 years of existence, I am no longer an optimist observer of this political arena. This national issue has stirred the Filipino's blood and is in my veins.

Other people will say I should probably thank Pet too much concerned with these events. But of course, I am a part of the issue. For future leaders belong to my generation. I don't want to wage the fight this government is planning. I do not wish my generation to disturb the disorder of corruption, administrative failure and political crisis.

It is said that the people get the kind of government they deserve. But I am sure we are smarter than we don't deserve what we have. We Filipinos are getting smart in choosing our leaders, that is why we have elected a less good narrative instead of Ferdinand Marcos Jr. Grace Poe and Loren Legarda. I'm sure we are improving, because in the recent elections, we did not re-elect unchecked politicians; we did not elect controversies personalities to the Senate and a leading hero to a senatorial group. These are proofs that we have learned our lessons.

They say that we should not ask Mr. heroes to sacrifice for the sake of our developing economy. After all, 2010 is fast approaching, in two years, we will have a new leader.

I used to say the same thing. But the recent agonies we continue to see have changed my mind. I believe that the less leadership is full of amenities and saying "I'm sorry" is not suffice. If we wait for seventeen years, the government will be morally broke, perhaps beyond repair. The remaining years of her term may be miserable for the well-off, but true misery is for those who have nothing to lose.

There is another question her critics always bring up. Will she keep democratic 2010? While I know she might try to stay in power, I have faith in my fellow Filipinos and I know they won't let this happen. If it does happen, we won't only have a new people power, but a new, more bloody revolution.

The President is lucky that she can stay in power because Filipinos are suffering from so-called "people power fatigue." But her luck seems to be running out. The recent Ayala protest with no marriages change are yet to come. Further investigations and future testimonies will push more Filipinos to the point of their comfort zones and make their voices heard. Observing events from the sidelines has made the people aware. If these protests are the only way to let Mr. Arroyo know that the people will no longer allow themselves to be bullied by her administration without fighting back, then suppose have fallen abroad. Like Icarada, the people will be unstoppable when they finally decide to break their silence.

I am sure of it, and I will be among them.

Frances G. Manggoring, 20, is an AB Journalism senior at the University of Santo Tomas.

YOUNG BLOOD

Frances G. Manggoring

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their hopes? What are their concerns? We welcome contributions from the younger members and below. — Ed.

Letter from Jun Lozada

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Gwen P. Dayo

DEAR MA. GWEN,

This is my first time to write to a journalist and the only reason I am doing so is to express my appreciation for your advice that I should stay in my full height and to be braver than I usually am.

Until now I am still wondering why I am here in this situation. I have always thought that I am not fit to even be the coach to begin a fight, but I am now in the middle of the ring. I will do my best to play the part by sticking to the truth that I know and speaking with malice to no one.

I am not one to point the berate of false testimony but one Conservative Sandoval in the falsehood of my testimony. I am not one to tell the truth that I know harassment and threats and bullied attempts on my life notwithstanding.

I was not prepared to carry this mess, I am an ordinary Filipino who just like to live a simple life. That is all I want to. I never use of my friends past it carelessly for me. But it's God who chooses me once, but we choose the gold ones or the light ones. I am never a coward but I am brave enough of being my people's representative, heeding all the harassment and threats, losing all my loyal buddies in the streets, tending to the needs of my young family members who are now still have a life to live. Ever since during these extra ordinary times and even after the glare of media and the public has wearied. All of these are heavy loads repeatedly that I am one of my brave hearts of being out of donations. I am still managing Filipinos.

But rest assured, I will rise to my full height with the grace of God and the love of the people. Just give me a little time!

Sincerely yours,
Jun Lozada

Late last week I received the above e-mailed letter which was a response to my column "How to your full height" Feb. 21, 2008) where I took note of some sensations and utterances of Lozada while he was testifying in the Senate and pointed out that he was not acting humiliating and not letting his dignity and the gravity of his revelations. And as my successors' words for him to "rise to your full height, look them in the eye, your head up to the heavens, ready to fight if you have to go down, go down with your fighting. Stick to what you know first hand. The rest be braver than you think. The more should you get some sleep."

I have checked to be sure that this letter was indeed sent by Lozada.

* * *

While I recognize the intensity of the rage against individuals in high places and the need to simply to closing the eyes up to the cruel anniversary of People Power, I see the rage to be as futile as the rage of individuals who, in the face of instructions and arguments have been relegated to the background. And so it is refreshing to hear from Bishop Socrates Villegas of the Diocese of Balanga, the province of the Hon. Edgardo Lopez, in 2006. In his pastoral letter "Unto Him" he says:

"The President must change or be changed; as with the senators and congressmen, for it is not enough for them to be elected to the House of Representatives and Congress. We must also work to form in the constituents that handles the elections. We must use democratic repentance and to form them not only to be voters but also to be active in support of our personal use as elaborate and unerring ordinary citizens.

"Let us all resign from corruption, from ineffectiveness, from lies, from misappropriation of power. Corruption is not just a crime of the government. It has become our national livelihood. It is not only those on top who are guilty. We all can believe we are all guilty as well."

The problem with us who are fellow is that we are the risk of losing life and limb when we as much as point to the sin, say, in the language less or complicate about party (?) misappropriations, commissions and collections in the so-called "permissible zone."

What is an idealistic pre-school educator to do when barangay officials ask her to cough up a five-digit figure (no receipts) before she would operate? What is a citizen, a homeopathist, to do when the medicines he ordered from abroad for special patients are "acting held by customs personnel until he gets "generosity"?

Almost all the journalists (not the from a hotel and now) who have been killed in the past two decades are local journalists who exposed the sin at the local level. Journalists who are killed while posing big daddy deals like the ZTE/NBN deal has the whole nation attending for months, even some of these journalists get shot in their own home town, and killed. Some are murdered in homes. They did not have the protective shield of a class-deed mess like Lozada has. Lucky.

What are citizens to do?

India's Aruna Roy, 2000 Ramon Magsaysay decoder for Community Leadership, empowered Indian villagers to claim what is rightfully theirs by exercising the people's right to information. Hopefully, other citizens will follow in the footsteps of Roy and Lozada and level among the masses. The second awareness.

In 2005, the Right of Information Act was passed. Let India and the government of India be demand access to information—branch begins to records to contracts. There were those for the asking. For Roy, this was India's second war of independence, "not against the British but against our own rulers."

It is not enough that citizens and their vote and wait. They have to be empowered and organized to ask. They have to be a base. All that energy and courage which should translate into painstaking examination of government records and contracts, the value they and the movement did. Read about her in "Great Men and Women of Asia" Vol. 3. It will be easy access, published by Asiel, available in National Bookstore and Powerbooks.

Today the Spratlys, tomorrow Palawan

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

HIS EXCELLENCY DIOSDADO TALAMPAYA CAN still look in having able to Give Dye the President, while his Excellency Bernardo Capella can still look in the mirror and say that he has something him a real face from the Pope?). The President can thank them for their intervention in the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines and my friend Capella for his unfailing support.

And thanks to the good bishops, the latest assurance that a Senate Arroyo Presidential dynasty can be built on the Aurrer dictatorship will be a reality soon, assure as Senate principles or actions. Let me remind Sens. Juan Ponce Enrile and Joker Arroyo that no one may ever have failed to demolish the Senate hearings, as they majestically used to last Tuesday, last as they say, God works in mysterious ways.

I am happy Bishops Tolentino and Archbishop Capalla have brought to our thoughts the President's sins. Let me only raise one further request for reasons only she is endowering of mentioning in office.

In Genesis, chapter 25:30-34, a mess of pottage (lentil soup), is what Esau gets from his brother in exchange for his birthright.

"And Esau said to Jacob, feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint...

"And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright.

"And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?

"And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob.

"Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils..."

In Tuesday, a witness told the Senate that the Chinese insisted that the President issue her loan based's unlisted, because they were skeptical of the seriousness of the government with regard to the ZTE/ZTE deal. She complied, reversing the issue of communication being ordered in time to help the administration election campaign last May.

After repeatedly playing the China card, worries, why the Chinese have to collect. What's in it for them?

Recently in "The Correspondents," ABC's Ricky Carandang began to zero in on what's ultimately at stake for China: the Spratlys. And what are Beijing's ultimate intentions in the South China Sea? By sending in the Chinese Navy to

Praying for Lozada, a goner if not for a purpose

LETTERS

WE ARE PLAIN HOUSEWIVES who eagerly awaited Rodolfo "Jun" Lozada's appearance at the Senate. We shared him, for we, the supporting we, and God, for making it possible for him to be there, to spill the beans on the ZTE-NBN anomaly.

We may not realize it, but he probably was the one who "eye of the storm" for a reason. It is said that "from the falling of a leaf has a purpose." We would not have gone this far were it not for the truck.

So, we believe Jun's intelligence as he is, he must have considered the formidable foes he would encounter: the President's husband, with his access to power and government machinery, including its immediate subsidiary and the Presidents herself, who seems as to believe that she is unaware of the gods and acronyms that surrounds her.

Belatedly we wish about Lozada because his life is in turmoil. His trifflesome mind and ingenuity could have brought him to greater heights. But his career had been derailed. Thus his future and those of his children are now uncertain, not to mention the great risk involved him.

And loving "friends" like Ramos, in fact who has suddenly become an enthusiast. Isn't should support Lozada, after all, it was he who invited Lozada in the office proper and got the ticket him this trouble.

We would like to assure Lozada that no amount of lying, distortion of facts or "legends" against him can demolish his credibility. We may be plain housewives, but those we are not. reflect his "street sense" to this. William Shakespeare's majestic only needs him look greater in our eyes.

Let us not be surprised if there will be more reports against him. Embarrassed, "as the hunt," the senate administration will watch all his indiscretions journey to Japan's him. But because he is on the side of truth, we've been praying for him, praying for divine intervention so that justice and truth will prevail.

We wish that the next precious few are praying this for the senators before 20:01, would pardon him.

—HANNAH LEIANNE MORENO, 98 Eastbound St., XXI Village, 1811 Marikina City

PA. Source at St. Jude Church near Malacañang

Healing priest needed in Congress and Malacañang

ABBOT MS. FILIPINAS, LUCIO that we have a priest who is blessed with healing hands? Fr. Fernando Suarez has apparently healed thousands of helpless souls from all walks of life in various parts of the world.

Now, will somebody please beg him to visit Congress and Malacañang because there two places are plagued with diseases that no physician, no conversion, no hacienda, and no fire, folks has ever cured before: indifference, arrogance, incompetence, disease of envy, disease of power, disease of greed, disease of pretense, hypocrisy, and the double-whammy cancer of guilt and corruption.

Should the good father heed this plea and succeed in "healing" the lawyers and minds, we can mention the pockets, of the denizens of those "hallowed" places, then every lolbo, pulo and preh would consequently be given the gift for the ability of not selling votes, and our country's can hopefully make a turnaround and take off.

—PORFIRIO PEDRAGOZA, 2144 Cadiz Ave., Colinda, NZ 87567 USA

Bishops and media share many major concerns

THE EDITORIAL "CHECKMATED Bishops" (Inquirer, 2/15/09) wrongly criticizes the bishops, in particular Jesuit bishop Francisco Claver, for having proclaimed, in a time of national crisis, their moral authority to speak out on the issues. Then the editorial concludes that our bishops have "become spiritual and moral illiterates."

Pity! Because they seem "unable to read the signs of the times." The Holy Spirit no longer is silent to spiritual persons by their prophecy and discretion they have distributed the exemplary into a position of "moral aura." The editorial only reconfirms the sad bishops have "become spiritual and moral illiterates."

I prefer to take a path that provides to bring about a better understanding of the role of bishops in politics. Let us see by some wisdom will almost always be present between media and the bishops regarding its moments politics. Dr. Joseph Bernardin, the late archbishop of the Archdiocese of Chicago, gave the reasons for this failure he said: "The problem is that the logic of the Church and that of media are different. The logic of media is conditioned absolutely by daily events. On the other hand, the logic of the Church looks to events only in long periods of time, where every particular event is seen as part of a wholistic context, implying that one does not separate moral teaching from man and economic life."

The problem then is how to make these two different logic exist. Media with their short term and slow logic and the bishops with their long range, in-depth and universal perspective can complement each other. Both aspects are vitally concerned with questions of justice and the common good, truth and solidarity. Both media and the bishops seek to discern the signs of the times by engaging in the struggles, hardships, and tragedies that mark human existence. Neither media nor the bishops can claim to have perfectly read the signs of the times. They seem to share their insights and findings in order to become a united creative force for enhancing justice and truth in Philippine society.

A responsible media can become a major contributor in our people's quest to create a society in which individual dignity can be achieved and not be crushed by the blind military economic or political forces of this uncertain contemporary postmodern and ravaging direction.

—REV. ANTONIO L. LUCERO, Ph.D., D.Theol. 8 Sampaguita St., Alabang Hills Village, 1775 Muntinlupa City

Auction house, marketplace of tradeoffs and sellouts

THE REPEN TO MANUEL L. Quezon III's opening salvo, "Manuel versus Perfumes." (Inquirer, 1/4/09) He said, "Time can prevent a country with 200 congressmen who have to be paid to become a spectacle" and concluded, "This, not to say, is where the House stands in the public scene, as few days every legislative act is presented to take place only after an auction."

Indeed, it appeared that President E. Manny Indeed the Liberal Party and joined the Nacionalista Party for the most noble of motives. Therefore, congressmen called for the ouster of Jose de Venecia as Speaker of the House of Representatives, claiming that it was time for "change." Did it so for the Masses. With rubber parody, Congress has turned into a marketplace where numerous tradeoffs and sell outs take place.

Quezon also wrote that such issue flop. Property Register, "Manufacturing competition Bayan Gaudencio Jr. has also been mentioned as a compromise candidate" for speakership. This proves that politics has been reduced to the level of bargaining and compromise. Principles and political compromise than virtue in the name of more administrative politics/positioning.

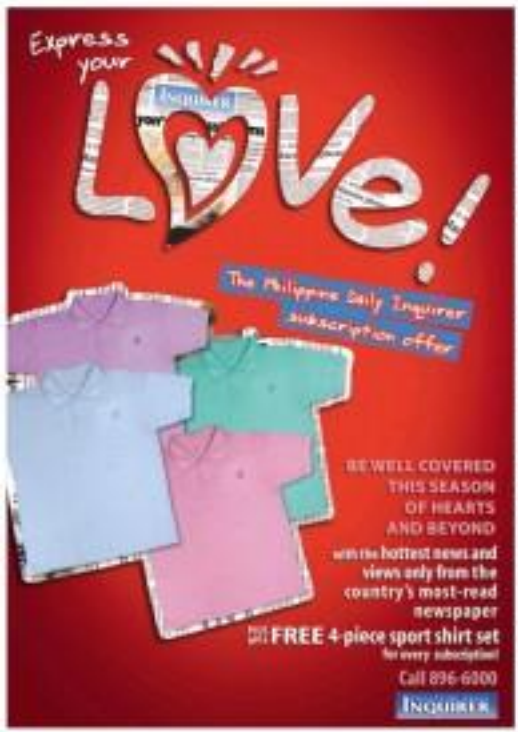
Quezon further wrote that "Supporting De Venecia, with the help of other parties such as the Liberals and the NPC, of which neither has any real love of Lakas or possibly even Gamps, has which later been removed by the Palace, sends the signal that this is not the center of the House to be its future.

This likewise "sends the signal" that no one there is as indispensable. The so-called United Opposition (UNO) is simply a coalition of non-administration politicians whose only disagreement with the administration party is the question of who should run the government.

Should the House Speaker not be permanent friends nor enemies, only permanent interests, as they say, as there is no party with intelligence allowing to one common agenda. Despite of all these issues, let but an upside of getting more individual power finally, consensus has become a way of Philippine politics.

Indeed, the words of elected Supreme Court Associate Justice Antonio Eduardo B. Nachura in his, "The ultimate disinterests is the qualitative improvement in the administration of matters, candidates and political parties alike. After all, it is the people, not the laws, who make the real difference."

—EMMANUEL G. HAPIL, House of Representatives Quezon City Commonwealth Avenue, Quezon City



One with Timor-Leste in struggle for justice

WE, THE ASIA PACIFIC SOLIDARITY COALITION (Apsoc), condemn the brutal assassination attempts on the two highest officials of the young nation Timor-Leste, which led to the death of others.

We raise again tomorrow our unflinching solidarity with the Timorese people in the face of this new crisis, in the hope that our pious support will help them overcome this momentary gloom.

A nation is not built overnight, along the way there are unavoidable bumps. It is sad, very tragic, that some of these bumps have been engendered by the very persons who want to claim to lead the country.

Timor-Leste has always been in our hearts. We have subjected to our second home. And we are humbled and honored to have been accepted by its leaders and our Timorese civil society partners as its "honorary citizens."

East Timor will always remain an inspiration. It has shown the world that even a resolute, humble people can beat a colossus who would invade, occupy, oppress and exploit them. The heroic struggle Timorese waged united in the hearts, although ultimately victorious, struggle for independence even in a time when the international community had already left them on their own.

Timor-Leste is a nation which has undeniably dependent if the injustices of the dark era of the occupation are not addressed head-on. The failure to do this will allow the ghosts of impunity to dwell and inhibit on the soul and future of a fledgling nation.

Tragically, the Timorese who were righteously united in the sacred pursuit of freedom have now turned against each other. Tolerance for each other's beliefs and the desire for greater unity to have consumed some of them. But we believe that the ugly tide of militarism, mistrust, vengeance and hate that pervades can be reversed and the gladness and of healing, reconciling and building a nation founded on justice is not impossible. We believe that most of the country's leaders, regardless of parties, are genuine patriots and are unselfish. We pray that they prevail.

We call on East Timor's political leaders to insure their commitment to lift their people from the morass of poverty and frustration. A national consensus is imperative. Victory must be considered and the leaders must show and lead by example. There can no longer be room for conflict of accusations they've been leading against each other; and for allowing an independent fact-finding system to investigate the events of Feb. 11 and bring to justice those responsible for the crimes. We call on the international community to help East Timor in this process, and we offer our cooperation in any effort to bridge the divisions in the long-battered Timorese society.

We wish the newly-sworn-in 6th Parliament President Jose Ramos-Horta and others who have been legitimized in their mandate.

We also wish the speedier recovery of this genius nation which deserves to live in peace, justice, prosperity and humanity.

—GUS MILLAR, coordinator, Asia-Pacific Solidarity Coalition

What's the fuss about SC's circular on libel?

I HAVE READ THE NEWS ITEM "SC, CIRCular on libel stirs." (Inquirer, 1/28/09) Why would some learned individuals be apprehensive about this? That Supreme Court circular is not a law but only a "circular" period.

A law is enacted by Congress by virtue of its constitutional power of legislature. It is different from a Supreme Court ruling which may be cited as a part of jurisprudence on a particular legal question that has been stressed in the Court for resolution or decision.

The Supreme Court circular on libel is neither a piece of legislation nor a Supreme Court ruling. It does not have the power of the Congress to enact or amend a law governing the imposition of penalties in libel cases, much less can it be interpreted as a class legislation. Therefore, the ordinance of the presidential legal counsel, Sergio Apostol, that this Supreme Court circular virtually amended the libel law is misplaced and unjustified.

In the Supreme Court circular titled "Guidelines in the observance of a rule of preference in the imposition of penalties in libel cases," all that a lawyer (whether one is a lawyer or not) is to understand the words "guidelines" and "preference." There is nothing in those words to necessitate or to be apprehensive about.

—ATTY. ELIZABETH B. NOLAN, 2011 Landson Village, Bindunan Avenue, Quezon City

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Across the NATION

Mayors back GMA, get ₱210B in IRA

FIELD WORK
US Ambassador Kristie Kenney watches as American soldiers rebuild a classroom of the Maragondon National High School in Cavite as part of the RP-US Balikatan exercises.

Execs sign 'honesty, integrity' manifesto

DAVAO CITY—IN THE FACE OF GROWING calls for President Macapagal-Arroyo to resign, mayors from Mindanao signed a manifesto of support for her "integrity and honest governance" in yesterday's first locally initiated Mindanao cluster conference of the League of Municipalities of the Philippines (LMP).

In response, the President gave the local executives an increase in their internal revenue allotment (IRA) shares to the tune of ₱210 billion yearly.

Mayor Guenon Abalos of Lanao, Isneng, Sultan Kudarat, and LMP president for Mindanao, said the officials' support was anchored on the Arroyo administration's role in the "sustainable development of the region."

"If we do not support her, we will all go back to zero," Abalos said.

But while the mayors expressed support for Mr. Arroyo, Davao Mayor Rodrigo Duterte, her outmatched on security matters, was nowhere to be found in media-thick venue. Duterte filed a leave of absence a day before the conference arrived.

When his turnout attended a peace forum in Jagna City early this month, Duterte was also unavailable.

It was a scene that was highly anticipated by people, especially after Davao Rep. Prospero Nograles became Speaker. Nograles and Duterte are both sons of the late Davao City Mayor Vicente Duterte, who are also known to be arch rivals.

According to Duterte's chief of staff Peanut Rauwani, the mayor was again out of town only because he was "called for scheduled" for a medical checkup.

The manifesto, signed by 26 provincial chairs of the LMP, said: "We firmly believe in her integrity and honest governance of our country. As a sign of our unwavering support and allegiance to her presidency, we are affixing our signatures."

In the same event, Mr. Arroyo signed into law the extension of Republic Act No. 8178, or the Agricultural Tariffication Act until 2013.

With the extension, she said, the government was expecting P6 billion yearly from agricultural exports and promised that 20 percent of the annual revenue would be used for farm-to-market roads, post harvest facilities, irrigation and other projects in Mindanao.

She announced the increase in the IRA for the local government units to ₱210 billion, or a 17-percent increase, annually starting this year.

Mr. Arroyo, before joining the mayors at Grand Regal Hotel, attended the cornerstone laying of a four-room, two-story school building worth ₱9.2 million in Sitio Tuod, Tuod District.

She was accompanied by Sen. Edgardo Angara and Malvern Rep. Abraham "Bahani" Mitra.

Other senior officials who also arrived for the mayors' conference were Senate Senior Legal Adviser Lorna Kapunan, Mar Roxas and Richard Gordon. Also expected was Senate President Marcial Pilar.

Abalos said the members of the LMP-Mindanao were satisfied by the MRO-attended gathering and expressed confidence that the President would be able to weather the crisis. *Jeffrey M. Tupas, Inet Medina Lacorte, Dennis Jay Santos and Dady Quebec, Inquirer Mindanao*

Cebu groups form coalition to back NBN probe

By Jaime R. Balandoy
Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—SEVERAL GROUPS have formed a coalition in Cebu today in response to calls for truth amid allegations of massive corruption in the stalled National Broadband Network project.

Several groups, including the Arise in Love Movement, the Voice of Satan Foundation, local Christian denominations, Ciri Church, Sandakua, the Task Force Disclosure of the Philippines and Freedom from Debt Coalition, have come together in what they called Initiatives for Truth Coalition.

Fr. Max Marino, national chairman of Sandakua, said the coalition was formed to serve as a venue for Cebuanos who would like to be counted in the fight for the truth.

However, Marino said the group had yet to come up with a collective stand in support calls for the resignation of President Macapagal-Arroyo or to launch another people power.

"We believe it's important that we have a venue here. We don't have illusions of gathering big numbers. But what's important is that there's a venue for Cebuanos to come and be counted," he said during a press briefing on Wednesday.

He said Sandakua-led alliance called for the resignation of Mr. Arroyo and her Cabinet so that government reforms could be instituted.

Pastor Carlos Mercenita, JR. head in the Visayas, also admitted that his group and Bantay Pilipinas had been urging the President to resign.

He also called Sand, a leader of the Muslim community here said his group had yet to come up with a stand on the NBN issue.

Hajjah Razul, head of the Muslim Tourism Coalition, said that many Muslim leaders in Cebu had not yet taken a position on the ongoing Senate investigation.

"We, the Muslim leaders in Cebu are still confused. Our discussions are ongoing. We definitely support the call for truth," Razul said during the press briefing.

WAVING HER scarf as she sang, Ms. Arroyo is guest at a peace rally in Tuca Mati in Cavite.

Extort gang member tags MILF man as leader

KIDAPAWAN CITY—AN ARRESTED Al-Khobar extortion gang member appearing in General Mindanao has admitted that his group is led by a field commander of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

Bist Mundi Cuba, who was arrested in President Quirino, Sultan Kudarat, last week, quickly added that the MILF as an organization, had nothing to do with the bombings and extortion of al-Khobar.

Al-Khobar claimed several bombings of homes and recently perpetrated areas in the cities of Kidapawan, Tacurong, Koronadal and General Santos.

Eid Kabalu, speaking for the MILF denied that the MILF was involved in extortion and bombing. He described the report as baseless and unfounded.

But Kabalu said the MILF central committee would investigate the allegations.

Confession

Cuba executed an extrajudicial confession, assisted by a lawyer, from the Public Attorney's Office, admitting to participation in the Valentine's bombing last year and the Makilala town bombing in October 2000 that left eight people dead and more than 40 others wounded.

He named a certain Zubaida Abdul, alias Commander Bulo, of the MILF 105th base command as the leader of the group. Abdul's unit operates in Barangay Pawtar, General SK Pendatun town in Maguindanao, he told police investigators.

Meeting place

Pawtar, according to Cuba, is in the heart of the Ligawasan marshland where members of the group usually meet to plan extortion and bombing in Central Mindanao.

Aside from Commander Bulo, Cuba said he also met a certain Salahuddin Hassan, whom he described as a relative of one of the suspected bombers arrested for his alleged participation in the RMC mall blast here last year.

A mall employee was killed and eight others were wounded.

Hassan is a relative of Abdulaziz Hassan, an Islamic preacher whose house in Barangay Sinsuyan, the city, was searched last week following reports that immediately bombs were being kept there.

Cuba led police teams in Hassan's house.

His bomb was recovered during the search but 20 kilograms of urea, which authorities say can be used as an catalyst in making an incendiary bomb, were seized.

But the wife of Hassan, Susan Hassan, said the fertilizers were not for bomb-making but were given to the family by the provincial government and the city government's rubber development projects.

Cuba also admitted to having bombed transmission towers here in July last year. He named Sudrudin Guialoon as his companion in that bombing.

Guialoon was arrested by police and Army agents in Tacurong a month later.

Cuba said he participated in the Makilala bombing in 2000 and that the improvised explosive device used in the attack was assembled in his home in Barangay Pawas by Commander Bulo.

Commander Bulo, he said, was involved in the bombing of Philfast Tuna Canning Corp. in General Santos that left four dead and 28 others wounded.

Cuba said he joined al-Khobar in 2000. He received ₱2,000 to plant bombs at the base of Transco towers here. *Edwin O. Fernandez and Charlie C. Belleza, Inquirer Mindanao*

Social welfare secretary calls for calm, sobriety

A NORMALLY QUIET MEMber of President Macapagal-Arroyo's Cabinet spoke out yesterday, rallying an embattled leader in the wake of protests and allegations of corruption against Mr. Arroyo and officials close to her.

In a statement, Social Welfare Secretary Esperanza Cabral said the rule of law should prevail amid calls for the President to resign.

Cabral urged people to avoid what she said were reckless pronouncements that undermine the Constitution.

"The rule of law is meant to be a shield against anarchy. Rather than inciting mobs through mass protests, people should instead concentrate on more pressing matters such as the plight of families in Eastern Samar," she said.

Continuous rains in the province last week resulted in floods and landslides that displaced nearly 5,000 families in low-lying and coastal areas.

"If indeed they are calling for people power, Filipinos can demonstrate it through relief operations for storms," Cabral said.

Ms. Arroyo instructed the Department of Social Welfare and Development to see to it that evacuees in the evacuation centers are in fit condition and for the department to provide adequate relief goods.

The President visited the town of Dolores, Eastern Samar on Saturday to inspect the damage wrought by continuous rains on the province.

Weather scientists said the rains were brought by the tail-end of a cold front.

More rains were predicted but flooding in Eastern Samar has subsided.

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE
BUREAU OF INTERNAL REVENUE
Quezon City

BIR IMPROVES PERFORMANCE IN 2ND SEMESTER OF 2000

Weathering a change of administration in the middle of 2000, the Bureau of Internal Revenue was able to achieve significant gains in its performance towards the close of 2000 due to the innovations and reforms introduced during the Second Semester of 2000.

Collection data provided by the Bureau of Treasury after it closed its books for the year 2000 disclosed that the BIR was able to collect P377.50 Billion for the months of July to December 2000. This accomplishment made an increase over collections for the same period in 2000 by P40.21 Billion. The BIR's revenues for 2000 vis-à-vis its collections for 2000 are presented in the following table:

PERIOD	CY YEAR 2000	CY YEAR 2001	INCREASE	GROWTH RATE
1st Semester	318,290,220,084.89	336,711,260,000.11	18,421,039,915.22	5.79%
2nd Semester	337,290,220,084.89	377,500,000,000.00	40,209,779,915.11	11.92%
TOTAL	655,580,440,169.78	714,211,260,000.11	58,630,819,830.33	8.13%

The BIR's Second Semester performance which witnessed a significant growth rate of 11.92%, together with the First Semester performance of 5.79%, growth rate attained the BIR to collect a total of P714.21 Billion for the year 2000. Thus, attaining a 8.13% increase over its total revenues for CY 2000 of P660.73 Billion. With the continuous implementation of the reforms aimed at improving processes and intensifying enforcement activities, the Agency remains positive that it will be able to meet up to the formidable challenge it faces this CY2001.

FEB. 23, 2001 - PIO

NEWSBRIEFS

■ BAGUIO CITY

Provincial journalists vs Manila Pen arrests

SIX KODAO journalists in Baguio City on Monday joined a petition filed by national media groups against the police's arrest by The Nov. 29, 2007 arrests of reporters covering the Peninsula Manila standoff held by detained Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV and Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim.

Anthony Alfred Ac, secretary general of the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines-Baguio-Benguet chapter, said the journalists signed a "petition-in-intervention" as the threat to press freedom also extends to media workers in the provinces.

The petition said the "acts, threats, warnings, admonitions, intimidation" of national, police and military officials "are unjustifiable and their mere organizations who commit the shocks" "produce the same fear and chilling effect" on provincial journalists.

Reuben Cabeza
Inquirer Northern Luzon

■ NUEVA VIZCAYA

Mining tunnel collapses; 1 killed

A SMALL-SCALE miner was killed after he was buried inside a tunnel that collapsed in the village of Didipio in Nueva Vizcaya in Nueva Vizcaya on Saturday.

Jun Ananayo, of Bunga village, was working in the tunnel in Sitio Dinayuan when it caved in at around 11 a.m., Supt. Dominga Lucas, acting provincial police director, said.

Lucas said the accident could have been caused by running blasts or soil erosion due to continuous rains.

Alain Garcia
Inquirer Northern Luzon

■ PAMPANGA

Panlilio receives P500,000 for GK

SGV Lilibi Panlilio received a P500,000 donation from the Ayala Foundation for Operation Smile from billion and put it to the campaign-against-gagging program in the province. "We believe in GK as an apt instrument that truly helps the poor and the homeless help themselves," he said.

Sr. Marinella Torres and Maria Nona, ABCDF trustees, handed over the check to Panlilio on behalf of the foundation.

Torres, 60, who belongs to the Immaculate Heart of Mary congregation, said Nona, a key figure of Bantay Bata, a TV program of ABS-CBN Foundation, facilitated the donation after reading the article on Panlilio on the "Bantay Bata" partnership" planned by GK with Pampanga officials.

Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

■ GENERAL SANTOS CITY

Lake Maughan water level drops

THE 4M SURFACE of Lake Maughan, a crater lake of Mt. Matutinao in the town of Tboli, South Cotabato, has gone down to a safe reading.

Tboli Mayor Ernesto Manuel told reporters that members of a rescue team this past on Monday to inspect the lake confirmed the drop in water level, but the warned residents living in the catchment areas to remain alert following continuous heavy rainfall in about a week now.

Earlier, John Lorca, coordinator of the Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council, warned people to stay away from signs of possible flash floods after Maughan's water level rose by 11 inches.

Agabo T. Jamin
Inquirer Mindanao

■ COTABATO CITY

Gunmen kill solon's secretary

UNIDENTIFIED men shot dead a long-time secretary of outspoken Rep. Didagen Dilangalen of Shariff Kabunsuan along a busy street in Cotabato City on Tuesday night.

The victim, Edna Apolinario, was also coordinator for more than a decade of Dilangalen's economic, social and scholarship projects for poor communities.

Senior Supt. Willie Dangane, city police chief, said Apolinario was driving a green sedan and with teenage council member Ritz Hayrose when 2 Dilangalen's motorcycle overtook them along Sinsuat Avenue at around 8:40 p.m.

Apolinario was shot safely, 45, sat. pistol and bloodied bloom in the head and body. Hayrose suffered bullets from a .9mm submachine gun.

Edwin G. Fernandez
Inquirer Mindanao

EDSA I PROTEST
People in Baguio City immediately got the point when Edsa I militants marched on the streets with the sign "Gusto ng bayan mo!" and planted candles in front of the Baguio Cathedral on Feb. 22, the anniversary of the first People Power revolution.

NPA victim's kin tell rebels: 'Leave Davao, leave us alone'

DAVAO CITY— THE FAMILY OF slain businessman Vicente Fernandez asked the New People's Army (NPA) to leave Davao and the entire family in peace after the commander-rebel group admitted the Feb. 7 killing of Fernandez was a mistake.

"We love Davao! This is our city," the Fernandez said in an e-mail message to the business.

"We hope that you bring those responsible to justice and leave Davao and Geoting's family in peace," the statement added.

Barely two weeks after they owned up to Fernandez's killing, the NPA admitted the killing was a mistake and apologized to the victim's family.

"As a matter of self-criticism, we apologize to the family of Mr. Vicente Fernandez as well as to the people in general for this highly regrettable circumstance," Rigoberto Sanchez, NPA spokesperson, said in a statement.

Fernandez, 65, was shot near A. Pichon Street (formerly Magallanes Street) and died of gunshot wounds two days later.

In its earlier statements, the NPA said that Fernandez was an enemy supplying foods, logistics and information to the military.

But in a statement released this week, the NPA retracted its claim. Sanchez said that the Southern Mindanao committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the Mercedes Arce Command looked into the killing to clear doubts, prompted by the people's sentiments, inside and outside the "revolutionary movement."

Sanchez said the results of the investigation showed that the "grounds on which the lower unit of New People's Army based their decision against Fernandez were not enough to warrant the penalty of death."

Sanchez also said the decision of the Ka Paking Lumbao Bonifacio Red Partisan Brigade (KPLBBPB) was found to be "flawed" and "incorrect."

"We are prepared to make an indemnification for this and are open to meet and talk with the Fernandez family," Sanchez said.

But in their message, "Love Letter to the NPA," the Fernandez said that "all along, they knew that Fernandez's death was a mistake."

"We couldn't find even the faintest reason for his demise," the letter said. "We have known the NPAs as 'freedom fighters,' we all want freedoms—oppression, aggression, corruption, red tape, most of all, we want freedom to walk the streets of Davao and enjoy our lives in Caraga."

The Fernandez recalled that Geoting, as Fernandez was fondly called by those close to him, loved the Caraga farm and planned it with care.

"He put a lot of effort into making it not only productive but also providing livelihood for some of the people in the area," the letter said.

The letter said their grocery concubine would be to be left in peace and to enjoy their farm alone.

"Geoting's death has to mean much more to us than an end," the Fernandez said. "If his death is an end to his life of helpfulness and purpose, an end to our freedom to walk the streets of Davao and an end of our freedom to enjoy the beauty and harvest of our farm, then, his death is truly senseless."

"But if his death leads to peace, we will embrace it. That will be the biggest and brightest consolation, the only thing that can comfort us in our sadness." Gerardine Lacanilao and Dennis Santos, Inquirer Mindanao

Farmers assail abduction of village exec by NPA rebels

ILIGAN CITY—A FARMERS' group from the Bendis Peninsula in Quezon province condemned the abduction of a village councilor in San Narciso town by suspected New People's Army (NPA) rebels last week.

In a statement by the Samahang Magbubukid ng Bendis Peninsula (SAMPA), a copy of which was sent to the Inquirer, the group said Deodito "Dodo" Empas, 44, a farmer leader and councilor of Barangay San Vicente, was forcibly taken by eight armed men on Feb. 19 while the victim and his companions were inside a rubber hut in Sitio Cawa.

Empas has since been missing while his family is hoping that he's still alive.

According to SAMPA, Empas' is the fifth case of abduction of farmers leaders in Bendis Peninsula involving communist guerrillas.

The guerrillas accused farmer leaders of serving as armed goons of several landed families in the area.

"The incident, however, is not a party issue. Rather it is how the armed men on an increasing number of agrarian-related human rights violations," the SAMPA said.

The farmers tried to contact NPA leaders in Quezon but the efforts proved futile.

The group said Empas and his group has been working to pinpoint 9 parcels of the 195-hectare Hacienda Uyanguren Cooperatives Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) so it can be eventually redistributed to actual tillers.

As a result of their campaign, Empas and his group have become the target of physical attacks by landowners' goons or members of NPAs on several occasions, according to SAMPA.

The landowner has filed a number of criminal cases against the petitioners, including qualified theft and trespassing, the group added.

Archbishop of Germen Bishop Buenaventura Famadico has appealed to Empas' abductors not to hurt him and set him free.

From 1998 to June 2006, the KMBP disclosed that at least 234 cases of agrarian-related human rights violations, including four killings, were committed in the Bendis Peninsula.

The group also noted that since President Macapagal-Arroyo assumed the presidency in 2001, a total of 42 farmer leaders have been killed in the course of their agrarian reform campaign in the Bendis Peninsula. Inquirer Mindanao

Uprightness, honesty way of life in Ibaloi village

By Maurice Malanes
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY— THERE'S SOMEthing that simple provinciano (rural folk) can strongly take pride in—a culture of uprightness and honesty.

In the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines is not actually starting from months to its call for "continuous action" against a "soft corruption" and dishonesty or an "ecosystem of dysfunction" said to be pervading governance. It can take all from what may be called an "ecosystem of goodness," which remains rooted in many rural and indigenous peoples' communities.

This example, in the Ibaloi upland village of Dalupirip in Itogon, Benguet, one can leave the house door and windows open without fear of thieves. Or a vacation homes facilities in the fields because no farmer will take it in the dead of night.

A paradise

"Our village is a paradise indeed," said the late elder Tomas Wadling of Dalupirip. "We can see how we don't have to fence off our homes because such one steals everybody."

Dwelling was describing his village to reporters one time in the 1990s, stressing how he could not give up the place for a resettlement site being offered by the government in order to give way to a dam project. He and his village mates had feared that the dam would submerge their community.

Until he died in 2008, Dwelling, a survivor and veteran of World War II, had fought hard to defend his village by the Agno River. As the "seat of Ibaloi culture" in Itogon, Dalupirip, with its age-old rice terraces and precious cultures of uprightness, would not simply go down the drain, Dwelling said.

Cultural heritage

Dalupirip and its rich cultural heritage must be inherited by by new Ibaloi generations, he said.

Offers of money and other compensation failed to blind Dwelling from defending the village. He insisted that not all that was precious in life could be translated into money terms.

There are other Dalupirips elsewhere. The other rural upland terrace rather have zero or very low crime rate. In fact, some jails are empty and used as a budget (warehouse).

In those towns, stealing is taboo, the community imposes their own de facto dictum always hammer into the heads of the young that it is better to be rich in character, honesty and integrity than in material wealth from questionable sources.

Such cultural pearls, to a high degree, has permeated even local politics.

In Kibungan (pop. 17,000), an elected official who would be reported to have engaged in anomalous transactions will surely not win another term. But another who is transparent and honest in all his dealings will.

TRIBE Dalupirip and other members of their community have learned to live with modernity, but their values still hark pre-Christian morality that are usually at par with modern religions.

'In these towns, stealing is a no-no...'

Still, even a well-loved political leader cannot go beyond three terms. The Kankanaey folk believe that even political power must be shared so other equally qualified community members can serve as mayor, councilor or barangay chair.

The only long-staying mayor ruled during the martial law regime of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos in the 1970s, when no elections were held.

Recent political events were not exempt to complaints of vote buying were reported that the rampant candidates who allegedly tried to buy his way to victory lost.

Morality values

Even without religion, which the colonialists introduced, the Kankanaey society has been highly moralist since time immemorial. This could be seen in a taboo system and an unwritten moral law, which are part of the upland folk's collective character and way of life.

Kankanaey morality or sense of right and wrong generally revolves around four major dimensions.

• Pangyew (fear of the unseen or the essence of humankind). A breach may spell eternal suffering for the offender. But it can sometimes backfire.

One current joke plot a ripe pineapple from a neighbor's backdoor farm or catch a neighbor's chicken. But it can be because while no one may have seen the offender, a perceived someone knows everything that happens.

• Inayam (fear of a perceived someone). It attacks more an one's conscience. The perceived someone may only happen in the selection, but the offender's conscience hurts the person most, and this may mean shoplost rights for the person.

• Bain (shame). The Kankanaey society is a responsible community. To live in such a community after one has been known to commit a grave wrongdoing is intolerable. Shame can become too heavy for a person to take that it becomes enough punishment in itself.

• Ik-an (respect). It can sometimes being resemblance. One respect is given to which or to whom it is due.

Despite the inroads of Christianity, these values, which have their counterparts in ancient non-Christian societies, remain in the minds of the upland folk. It is thus common to hear elders warn, "Ong-o su yapnis-kom ngem amma su di inayam (Don't stay injured as at pagan, but we know about inayam)," referring to a strong sense of right and wrong.

INQUIRER Southern Luzon

Pupils finally leave tents for 'classrooms'

FROM LANCER rooms, the pupils of the Mapon Elementary School in Guinobatan, Albay transfer to their temporary classrooms under the grandstand of the Albay Sports Complex

By Jaymee T. Gamil
Guinobatan, Albay

A PICTURE IS SAID TO paint a thousand words, but one that appeared on the Inquirer's front page also signed up a long-neglected quintessential project in Guinobatan town in Albay.

Displaced pupils of the barangay Mapon Elementary School had been conducting classes in cramped tents after their village was transferred to the Albay Sports Complex in Barangay Travesia in 2006. Mapon has been declared a hazard zone after homes there were battered by rains and buried in mudslides triggered by Supertyphoons "Milenyo" and "Reming."

The newspaper's front-page photo on Jan. 11 brought the Mapon school into the limelight—and fast-tracked its way into the local government's list of priorities. The photo showed a class being held inside a tattered tent, measuring 7 meters by 8 meters.

"It is ironical for one picture on the front page of the Inquirer, we would probably have waited longer to get some assistance," teacher Rozele Cadag said.

Temporary classrooms

Fabrication and final officials descended the town and provided temporary classrooms in the 192 complex.

The Grade-6 class was relocated to neighboring Barangay Francisco Hall, while the Grade-1 class will soon be given a temporary classroom at the Travesia Elementary School, Cadag said.

Classes in Grades 1 to 6, with around 20 students each, now occupy two rooms at the sports complex grandstand. While these rooms, which were used as storage areas for athletic equipment, are not necessarily comfortable and spacious, occupying them is far better than staying in the tents, Cadag said.

"When it is raining we would be caught amidst high floods. When it is windy, sand gets blown to our faces. When it is sunny the heat inside the tent is unbearable. It is impossible for the children to study in these conditions," she said in an earlier interview.

No school site in place

Since October last year, 50 more pupils had dropped out of school. Originally, the school had around 300 pupils before the typhoons struck.

Out of the 146 elementary schools in Albay, only the Mapon Elementary School remains displaced. Malpon was set to be given permanent housing last year in a six-hectare lot in Barangay Mauraro, but the municipality and the National Housing Authority were not able to include a school site in the plan.

The problem eventually resolved. Representative Lito Atienza, who contributed P400,000 of his own money last November to buy a hectare of land adjacent to the relocation area for the school.

Some P3.6 million from the Calamity Assistance and Rehabilitation Efforts (CARE) funds have already been allocated for the construction of three buildings, which will have seven classrooms and four comfort rooms, Lolita Santiago-Cruz, the Office of the Assistant School Superintendent said.

"The actual construction will begin after the signatories for the memorandum of agreement have been completed," she said.

Incomplete documents

Both Santiago and Cadag lamented the delay caused by the incomplete documents. However, they said paperwork or not, with or the rain, money and lay-out, were already ongoing for the school.

Hopefully, construction will be complete in two months, Cadag said.

She says only hope that when the school year opens, the housing units can also already accommodate the villagers. "Otherwise, we'll have a school but no home as constructs," she said.

THE ALBAY Sports Complex in Barangay Travesia, Guinobatan.

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Walang Kapas.

Late SPORTS

More Sports on A23 to A26

FLINTFOODS center Rudy Raymundo tries to get a shot off a double team by Sta. Lucia's Hubert Dreston (top) and Derek Ryken

Yap returns, but league still feels his suspension

By Marc D. Castillo

JAMES YAP RETURNED TO ACTION AND came up with a statement game that made the message clear to Sta Lucia: This time, if the Realtors want to serve around with Pure-Foods, they'd have to go through him first.

Urged by his coach to channel his frustration over his suspension to the court, Yap scored 28 points in the fourth quarter last night and the Tender-Juicy Giants won 90-81 decision of Sta. Lucia that forced a deciding seventh game for the Asian PBA Philippine Cup at the Araneta Coliseum.

"This game was special because there was no tomorrow. You'll see him," Yap said in Filipino. "Now we have a chance to win the series."

Outside the 'lines of the hardwood floor he sizzled on route to 30 counters, the league was forced to deal with the repercussions of his suspension.

The league's technical head went on a leave of absence reportedly after voicing his disagreement over Yap's suspension, a lawsuit-culpable source told the INQUIRER last night. Also, a television spokesperson confirmed that San Miguel Corp. was pulling out its advertisements on television and in-house in an apparent protest over the suspension.

"We wanted to survive against all odds and that's what we did tonight," Gregorio said, a tinge of anger very evident in his voice. "It's just great to have your MVP on the floor when it's normalcious."

"Deep in my heart, I believe we shouldn't have lost games in Game-5."

Perry Martinez, the league's ombudsman chief, did not approve of the suspension and went on a leave of absence after seeing his disagreement, reportedly because of Gandhi's suspension.

The source, who talked on condition of anonymity, feared that Martinez and commissioner Reynaldo "Sonny" Bautista disagreed on suspending Yap, with Martinez citing a memo signed by co-commissioner Mel Sinlo as the reason.

According to the source, Martinez pointed out that Sinlo had circulated a new rule memo down a year ago eliminating "judgment calls" as violations of referees which caused the removal to any song especially after the game is open/ass ended.

Martinez "signed to upgrade Yap's flagrant 1 to Flagrant 2," but said that the player cannot be suspended since the league would be "overstepping judgement call."

Yap hit four triples in the fourth period, the last proving to be the klutz that all the Realtors' collective threats with just over three minutes left as it drained Dwight Ramos' 79-75.

Interviewed by the bayanes, Bautista refused to comment pending the completion of the review. A board meeting is scheduled today and the controversy is expected to be resolved.

Martinez, on the other hand, did not answer phone calls or text messages.

The scores

PUREFOODS 90 – J. Yap 30, Pingris 10, Salvador 10, Tiu 9, Ramos 8, Yee 5, Arboleda 4, Rivera 4, Lastimosa 3, Castillo 3.

STA. LUCIA 81 – Ogbeide 22, Mendoza 14, Dyken 11, Dela Rosa 9, Villegas 8, Ong 6, Miranda 6, Mendoza 5, Gonzalez 3, Dreston 2, Guevara 2.

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Editor Ernie G. Dipasupil

4 Bulacan cops in rob case found guilty by Manila court

'Denial and evidence of accused lame, fabricated'

By Allison W. Lopez

A MANILA COURT YESTERDAY found four Bulacan policemen guilty of robbery in band and sentenced them to eight years in prison for stealing P10 million worth of jewelry from a businesswoman in 1994.

PO3 Bernardo Legaspi and senior inspectors Officers 1 Crisanto Mabagos, Eduardo Bautista and Arnulfo Bunoz of the Bustos police in Bulacan province were also ordered to pay P10 million to their victim, Rocila Mortal Ambrosio.

The court, in Branch 39 of the Makina Regional Trial Court, but was transferred to the Manila RTC upon the request of the suspects who claimed they were tortured by the Bulacan police into owning up the crime.

In a 22-page decision, Judge Myra Garcia-Fernandez of the Manila RTC Branch 39 said the accused's defense consisted of denials which did not deserve as much weight as the positive testimonies of witnesses and has no evidentiary value.

Both the complainant and Bunoz, who saw the incident from inside the house, later identified the four suspects in a police lineup.

"The positive identifications by Rocila Ambrosio and Bunoz of the four accused as perpetrators of the crime, absent any showing of ill motive, must prevail over the accused's lame and obviously fabricated defenses of denial and alibi," Fernandez said.

Based on court records, Ambrosio, a jewelry trader, was alighting from her car with her husband near their house in Meycauayan, Bulacan, when the four suspects appeared, pointed guns at them and grabbed the victim's three bags. The incident happened on March 10, 1994.

The bags contained P10 million worth of jewelry, which included South Sea pearls and precious stones, a weighing scale and P13,000 in cash.

The court, meanwhile, ignored the accused's defense that they were just tortured by their fellow policemen into confessing to the crime and were made to sign documents admitting their guilt.

The court noted that the accused were not able to prove that it was "physically impossible" for them to be at the scene of the crime. They also failed to present a witness who could testify that they were somewhere else when the robbery occurred, it added.

One of the accused, Mabagos, claimed the complainant was just trying to get even with him because of a previous case involving him and her relative. The court, however, said he was unable to present evidence to support his accusation.

WE KNOW WHAT YOU KNEAD
Those who want a massage can go to this massage and hair salon on Bonifacio Avenue in Mandaluyong City

Makati traffic rerouting plan for Friday interfaith rally out

By DJ Yap

THE CITY OF MAKATI HAS RELEASED ITS traffic rerouting plan ahead of the interfaith rally at the heart of the central business district on Friday.

Traffic on the stretch of Ayala Avenue from EDSA-Pasay (or Makati-bound) shall be diverted starting at 1 p.m. on that day, according to the city's Department of Public Safety Director, Hermenegildo San Miguel.

Thousands are expected to converge at the foot of the Mabini Aquino Monument at the corner of Ayala and Paseo de Roxas Avenues in a mass protest ignored by allegations of corruption surrounding the absorbed forfeited Bataan Export Zone deal.

All passenger buses coming from EDSA Avenue shall be directed to go straight to Gil Puyat (Buendia), turn right on Makati Avenue, and left on Ayala, San Miguel said.

All other vehicles, except passenger buses coming from Edsa or Ayala, shall be asked to turn left or right upon reaching Makati Avenue. Buses will turn right on Makati Avenue and then left to Buendia.

Private cars and passenger jeepneys coming from Washington going toward the central business district shall turn right on Gresham, then right on Dela Costa (onward Legaspi Street. Jeepneys may take Pasay Road, then turn right toward Amorsolo. The stretch of Paseo de Roxas shall be closed to traffic from Ayala Ave to Villar Street.

Frat leader accused of raping girl as part of initiation rites

By Tina G. Santos

MANILA POLICEMEN ARRESTED AN 18-year-old fraternity leader who allegedly raped a 14-year-old girl as part of initiation rites Tuesday night.

The suspect was identified as Dexie Bravosingco, said to be the founder of 18 Angels Gang Tondo Chapter and a resident of Sitio Aniñipao Harvest, Tondo.

The arrest came following a complaint filed by a 14-year-old student, a resident of Bayot Street, Tondo, who claimed that she was raped by the suspect as part of her initiation in the fraternity. The group reportedly accepts female members.

Supt. Arnaar Mangaoang, chief of the Manila Police District District 7 (Binondo District), said the suspect, who yielded a knife, was arrested around 11:30 p.m. on Tindalo corner Aniñipao Streets in Tondo.

The victim claimed the suspect raped her for the first time last Dec. 22. The last incident happened on Feb. 22 inside the suspect's house after the group, including her and the suspect, had a drinking spree, she added.

The victim said she did not immediately inform her parents about the incidents because the suspect threatened to harm her.

She added that the suspect used the fraternity to recruit female members and that rape was part of the initiation rites.

Charges of rape and illegal possession of deadly weapon were filed against the suspect, police said.

For inquiries, please contact the Toyota Customer Assistance Center Hotline: 815-0912 from Monday to Friday, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm or email us at customerassistance@toyota.com.ph

Man stabbed 15 times survives attack in Navotas City

By Nancy C. Carvajal

WITH A BLADED WEAPON STILL stuck in his body, a construction worker was rushed to the hospital on Tuesday night after he was stabbed 15 times by an unidentified assailant in Navotas City.

Fortunately, the victim, identified as Joe Tanares, 24, survived the attack and was reported to be in stable condition at the Jose Reyes Medical Center.

In his police report, SPO1 Sandy Fabrellis said Dr. Joe Tanares was stabbed by a metal wielding an arrow-shaped knife at around 8 p.m. Tuesday.

Investigators showed the victim was walking on a street in Barangay Daang Hari when a man blocked his path and attacked him.

According to witnesses, the man only stopped when the knife got stuck on the victim's stomach.

The man then fled, leaving the bladed weapon behind, the police said.

The victim was reportedly on his way to a carnival in the area when he was attacked.

Narsina police chief Senior Supt. Serafin Barot promised to deploy additional police to the area to prevent a similar incident.

He also requested witnesses to come forward so police would be able to lift fingerprints from the knife used to stab the victim which could help them identify his attacker.

"We left evidence which is vital to the investigation," Barot said.

Text jokes of the times

ON TARGE

RANSON ZoSo

THERE ARE TIMES WHEN newspapers and radios agonize over whether to publish or broadcast a tragic or bizarre event, like Hitler. I say do it.

One such sign is the pervasiveness of text jokes about the President and her husband Mike Arroyo.

I see a pattern: A leader is subjected to months and months of insults, albeit not up-front, by his/her followers before they just turn him/her.

In the aftermath of the examination of Ninoy Aquino, jokes about the Marcoses spread like wildfire by word of mouth.

Chief messaging was predictably not even in the mind of its inventor (her).

During the "hostage" and June Mitchell scandal, text jokes very much involving us then President Ping were in almost every cellphone's cell phones.

Here's one:

"Teacher: Class, what is the new definition of graft and corruption?

"First Grader: Back off!

"Student: Very good! That means you're reading the newspapers.

What then is the meaning of Comelec?

"Second Student: Flirt, ma'am.

And yet, another joke.

Ebong has it will have to be in Filipino because otherwise, it won't have an impact).

"Si Jun Lozada daw ay dala-dalang libak at kalokohan sa pagpunta sa Senado," sabi ni Gloria.

"Eh kasi naman, ang dami niyang inilabas!"

• • •

The people might be appeased if GMA would break up with Mike Arroyo.

But since that's impossible, since she's very much enamored with her "honey," she might think of having "Hi" and her son Mikey go on voluntary exile...again... to the United States until she finishes her term in 2010.

Think about it, Madame President.

• • •

Sen. Jamby Madrigal, bold, big up a copy of a document on the controversial C2NE-Mile project showing an "NO" marking on the marginal note, commented:

"It is important for us to know who this PO is.

"Is it Fine Gaon, First Gangster, or First Gentleman?"

Madame Senator, it isn't too difficult to guess.

• • •

A Front-page photo in yesterday's Inquirer showed Malaya Gov. Joey Salceda touching President Gloria's hand in his forehead in a penitential gesture.

The photograph was taken with the "touch" on Incident where the governor referred to the President as a "lucky bitch" during a forum last week at the Senate.

Although the President said she was not affected by the "touch" (eg, touch her forehead instead and foment economic advisor, a Palace source said GMA was fuming.

My spy said the President called to the spokesman Salceda's apology was finalized in television news reportage and written about in the newspapers.

Judge lifts ban on tobacco outdoor ads

By Kristine L. Alave

A MANDAUE JUDGE HAS RELIFTED tobacco firms to advertise using outdoor billboards as long as the sign is within the store premises, decision that stunned the ire of anti-tobacco groups which promised to take their case to the Supreme Court.

Judge Alberto Gadiano of the Mandaue Regional Trial Court Branch 283 ruled that cigarette manufacturers can advertise their products on large outdoor billboards as long as these are within the premises "of the point of sale."

"Simply put, under the statute, it is clear that the area where permissible outdoor advertising may be placed is broad enough to include all areas within the premises of said point of sale where a paying patron can purchase or obtain tobacco products," the four-page ruling issued on Feb. 11 said.

The case stemmed from Fortune Tobacco Corp.'s petition seeking the honorary relief on the enforcement of Sec. 15 of the Tobacco Regulation Act of 2003 (Republic Act 9211), particularly on whether installed billboards and signs in stores are exempted from the ban on outdoor advertisements. The prevalent issues that "no leaflets, posters and similar materials may be posted, except inside the premises of point of sale retail establishment ..."

All major tobacco manufacturers such as Philip Morris, Japan Tobacco, La Suerte and Mighty Corp., are parties to the suit.

With tomorrow's decision, the tobacco firms' outdoor advertisements, along with posters, leaflets, are now exempted from the ad ban imposed by the law.

The Department of Health and other advocacy groups, meanwhile, expressed disappointment over the ruling and vowed to appeal it before the Supreme Court.

Health Undersecretary Alexander Padilla maintained that health units that the ruling does not mean a halt to the enforcement of the cigarette outdoor ad ban.

As far as the DOH is concerned, the prohibition is still in place and no officers should violate the ban, he said.

"This court ruling is not yet final and executory. We have not received a copy of the order but from what I gather, the interpretation is wrong and is opposed to the government's position on the matter. This will be appealed by the office of the Solicitor General," Padilla said.

"In the meantime, enforcement officers, especially in the LGUs, should stick to the law as it is written. Congress should consider passing laws to shield public health policies like these from tobacco industry interference," he added.

QC courthouse gets 2 bomb threats

By Marlon Ramos

HUNDREDS OF EMPLOYEES AT the Quezon City Hall of Justice were evacuated from the building yesterday morning after a city prosecutor and a judge received bomb threats from an unidentified caller.

Inp. Arnulfo Francu, chief of the Explosive and Ordnance Division of the Quezon City Police District, said a woman caller first called up the office of QC Regional Trial Court Branch 93 Judge Cesar Mauricio at 8:15 a.m.

He said the call was received by court stenographer Agnes Reyes.

"The woman caller said a group of men had planted three bombs inside one of the rooms in the building. The caller then hung up the telephone," Francu told the inquirer.

He said security personnel at the Quezon City Hall immediately ordered all the employees to leave the four-story building.

A bomb-sniffing dog then conducted a search of the structure but did not find any bomb.

The EOD team was about to leave the building at 9:40 a.m. when another bomb threat was received at the Office of City Prosecutor Edgardo Pangan on the fourth floor.

Francu said the caller told Pangan's staffer, Jean Espero, to quickly leave the building as the bombs they had planted in her superior's room was set to explode in a few minutes.

Although the employees were told to report for duty, they did not enter an evacuation of the place because the threats were one real, he added.

Francu added that they were looking into the possibility that the bomb threats were related to a criminal case that involved Eddie Obiena Jr. who is facing in March 1998.

According to him, they received information that Pangan was handling the case concerning the incident which killed more than 100 people and left dozens injured.

Francu said the case was being heard in the sala of Judge Mauricio.

"Pangan was reportedly even attending a hearing of the Obiena case inside Judge Mauricio's courtroom when the first bomb threat was made," he added.

YOUTHFUL ACTIVISTS
Young girls display posters hailing their rights as children during a press conference yesterday in Quezon City.

Land row eyed in murder of businesswoman

By Marlon Ramos

THE KILLING OF A BUSINESSwoman in Quezon City over the weekend would have been the offshoot of a land dispute and not a simple case of robbery, according to police.

Police Director Isidro Lapeña, chief of the Quezon City Police District, said investigators are looking into the possible involvement of a businessman in the death of Imelda Ramos.

The victim was shot dead last Saturday night by a man a few meters away from her house in Barangay San Bartolome, Novaliches. The gunman also took the victim's bag containing cash and valuables.

Mahinang said they received information that Ramos had a squabble with the businessman after she allegedly turned down his proposal to buy her property in Quezon Highway.

Her son declares he was harassed between two guards of land owned by the businessman, the police official said.

"The businessman said the victim's lot was an 'eyesore' and he could not develop his property. He tried to buy Ramos' land but she apparently rejected the offer," Mahinang said.

He declined to name the businessman pending the results of their initial investigation.

METROBRIEFS

2 QC cops hurt in road mishap

TWO MEMBERS of the Quezon City Police District were hurt when they patrol car they were riding on crashed into a tree after it was supposedly sideswiped by another vehicle on Visayas Avenue, Quezon City, yesterday morning. SPO1 Alberto Obil and SPO2 Orlando Dimaso, assigned at the QCPD Station 10 in Kamuning, suffered bruises and were brought to the Camp Crame Hospital. Arrested from the Quezon City Traffic Sector 4 was the policeman who was driving an Revos sedan in Barangay Lagro. Hands on board their mobile car at about 5:30 a.m. when another car sideswiped their vehicle. "The cabin car of the victims suddenly slammed into a tree after it was supposedly sideswiping them," the report added. Traffic investigators said they were still determining if the claims of the policemen about the accident were true.

Marlon Ramos

Free aerobics for Manila City Hall employees

TO PROMOTE a healthier lifestyle among its employees, the Manila City government will conduct a one-hour free aerobics session after office hours every Friday starting on March 7. Mayor Alfredo Lim yesterday urged the workers to assist in the activity aimed at increasing mobility and eliminating sedentary by "getting physical." "Working out together improves the health bond of the workforce, both as an individual and as a team," he said. The free aerobic sessions will be supervised by Metro Manila Development Council Council Member and Sport 21 at the Manila Bay Park in Malate, and on March 28 and April 25 at the Kartilya ng Katipunan beside City Hall. Lim also urged the public to join the runs or marathons for a cause such as the recent Pasig River marathon in which he hosted the city government's contingent. The mayor said residents should go on leisure walks with their families at the Bayanihan on Roxas Boulevard or enjoy the cultural performances put on by public school students every Saturday afternoon.

Alburo M. Lopez

DID YOU KNOW

TODAY, Feb. 28, is the 13th death anniversary of Tito Espinosa, the Masbate congressman gunned down by two men on February 1995 on Commonwealth Avenue, Quezon City.

His death came one year after the killing of his brother Moises Sr., also a congressman, at the Masbate City airport, and six years before the murder of his nephew Moises Jr., then city mayor. Political rivalries in Kho was implicated in the murders of both Moises Sr. and Tito, but was later cleared.

Cyrill C. Almendrala, Inquirer Research

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5 suspected users of illegal drugs nabbed in Pasig

By Kristine L. Alave

THE PASIG CITY POLICE ARRESTED FIVE FE drivers suspected of using illegal drugs in a house in Barangay Pinagbuhatan Tuesday morning.

PO2 Aries Sabanilla identified the suspects as Godfino Delligero, 33; Alexander Reza, 40; Rogelio Bautista, 42; Edmundo Sally, 43; and Ricardo Quiaboo, 41. Except for Delligero, a Pasig City resident, the rest live in Rizal province.

'Illegal activities'

The report said the suspects were arrested at around 10 a.m. in a house owned by a certain "Rosmaya" on Sto. Niño Street, Purok 2, Barangay Pineda. The police said they received information from a village security officer about "illegal activities" going on inside the house.

Policemen who went to the site said they caught the suspects using substances believed to be shabu. Two pieces of aluminum foil and an improvised burner were recovered from the suspects.

The five men were detained at the Pasig City police station pending the filing of illegal drug charges against them.

Kosovo vows to defend every inch of territory

PRISTINA—KOSOVO PRIME Minister Hashim Thaci vowed on Tuesday to guard jealously every "inch" of its territory, as Serbia threatened to sue the United States for recognizing a "phoney state."

"We will never allow Kosovo's territorial integrity which has been internationally recognized, to be jeopardized," Thaci told reporters on a visit to Kosovska Mitrovica to mark the Serb security forces in 1999 which prompted a Nato air war on Serbia in defense of the ethnic Albanian community.

"Not an inch of Kosovo's territory must be touched by anyone," he said, warning that the authorities were prepared to "use defense mechanisms for the territory of Kosovo."

The authorities were to "permanently install" with the UN mission in the former Serbian province and also cooperating with Nato-led peacekeepers (KFOR) deployed in the country, he said.

With the rhetoric nearing fever pitch, an adviser to Serbian Prime Minister Mirjana Kosovska Mitrovica to turn the dispute into a legal minefield, the Beta news agency reported.

"Since this outgoing US administration has recognized the phoney state of Kosovo, Serbia's charges will follow," Belgrade Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic said. "It would be best for the (premier US) administration to annul the decision to recognize the phoney state, or for the new administration to do it immediately" after America's November presidential elections.

"If the US does not annul that decision, then we will file suits against America before all international courts," Radovanovic told Beta.

The International Court of Justice in The Hague is the UN's highest court set up to deal with disputes between states.

Poland became the latest European Union heavyweight to offer recognition Tuesday, with Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski saying his cabinet hoped it would be a "stepping stone" towards EU accession for both Serbia and Kosovo.

Cyprus, Romania, Slovakia and Spain remain opposed, while Greece has also expressed doubts after Kosovo's Albanian-majority parliament unilaterally declared independence on Feb. 17.

Belgrade argues Kosovo's secession violates UN Security Council Resolution 1244, adopted at the end of Nato's bombing campaign, which put the disputed territory under United Nations rule while retaining Serbian sovereignty.

Meanwhile, more than 1,000 former Serbs suffered on Tuesday in a 10th consecutive day of protests in the ethnically-divided northern Kosovo town of Mitrovica.

Hundreds of Serbs also clashed with police outside the UN complex in their Bosnian stronghold of Banja Luka.

Six people including four policemen were injured with a teenager suffering serious head injuries, a hospital official said.

Police detained 10 of the demonstrators including 15-minors, spokesperson Bojana Gasovic said.

After a five-hour National Security Council meeting, Serbian officials insisted "all Beans taking part in (all) violence must be identified until necessary justice measures taken." However, Banja Luka agency said the meeting "praised" the police and "the way they conducted their activities during all protests in Serbia." One person was killed in last Thursday's US embassy blaze and 136 people, including dozens of police officers, were injured in other violence.

In the northern city of Novi Sad, several thousand people including family friends and nationalist politicians attended the funeral of Zoran Vujovic, whose charred remains were found in the US embassy.

A Belgrade court said the cause of Vujovic's death was yet to be established. AFP

WorldBriefs

Britain quake

MANCHESTER—The strongest earthquake to hit Britain in more than two decades was felt across large parts of the country early Wednesday, officials said. Some homes had broken damage and one man was injured in the resulting chimney. The 5.2-magnitude quake struck shortly before 1 a.m. and was centered about 200 km north of London, the British Geological Survey said. Julian Hobbs, of the organization, called it the most powerful quake in Britain since a 5.3 tremor hit North Wales in 1984. AP

China fire

BEIJING—At least 15 people were killed and three others injured after a building in the southern Chinese city of Shenzhen went up in flames on Wednesday, state media reported. The fire started just after 6 a.m. in the first floor of the "relatively old building" in which dumpsters were also positioned, the Xinhua news agency reported. The three survivors jumped out of the burning building, the report said. An investigation has begun into the cause of the blaze, it said. AFP

Feared dead

KABUL—An American woman aid worker and her local driver who were abducted in Afghanistan may have been killed, foreign groups said. Cyndi Mood, 40, an employee of the Overseas Development Assistance Foundation (ADRA), and her driver were kidnapped by unidentified gunmen last month while heading to work in a car in the southern city of Kandahar. "Although we have no confirmation of their deaths, we have received information over the past few days indicating that our two aid workers have been killed," ARLDF said on its website. Reuters

Suicide bomber

BAGHDAD—A suicide bomber killed 14 people in an attack on a mosque in the southern Iraqi city of Mahawil on Tuesday, security sources said. Another seven people were wounded but their other details were immediately available. Another police source said the initial death toll was five. Iraqi police in Mahawil, 350 km south of Baghdad, said the bomber was carrying explosives on his body to attack worshippers. Reuters

Prisoner swap

DUBAI—An armed group holding the British captive it is negotiating with Britain's Muslim envoy to release him in exchange for their freedom in a videotape aired by the Al-Arabiya news channel on Tuesday. AP

THE NEW YORK Philharmonic musical director Lorin Maazel conducts before a North Korean audience in Pyongyang on Feb. 26. The 106-member of the New York Philharmonic orchestra arrived in communist country on Feb. 25 to play the cream of Gershwin and Dvorak in a break-down barriers between the hardline nation and the United States. AP

Iraq condemns Turkish incursion, wants troops out

BAGHDAD—IRAQ ON TUESday condemned Turkey's incursion into northern Iraq to fight Kurdish guerrillas in the strongest terms yet and demanded an immediate end to what it called a violation of its sovereignty.

"Thousands of Turkish troops crossed the border late Thursday to root out PKK fighters who have used mountainous northern Iraq as a base for their fight for self-rule in the mainly Kurdish southeast of Turkey since the 1990s.

"The cabinet expressed its rejection and condemnation for the Turkish military incursion, which is considered a violation of Iraq's sovereignty," the Iraqi government said in a statement released by spokesperson Ali al-Dabbagh.

"The cabinet stresses that withdrawal military action is not acceptable and threatens good relations between the two neighbors."

Asked about Iraq's criticism of the Turkish incursion and whether the United States wants Turkey to wrap up the operation in days or weeks, White House spokesperson Dana Perino said: "I'm not going to put a time frame on it. Obviously we support Turkey and we support Iraq. One of the things we have supported is that the two countries have regular contact and consultation during this incursion. We want to see it to be short-term, and we want it to be very narrowly targeted," she said.

"We understand that Iraq does not want Turkey to be in their region, but they also don't want the PKK up in their northern region, and they understand what it's like to have terrorists attacking innocent civilians," she added.

Dabbagh earlier said that a Turkish envoy would meet Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, a Kurd, and other officials including Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari in Baghdad on Wednesday.

An Iraqi government source identified the envoy as Ahmet Davutoglu, a senior foreign policy adviser to Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan. Ankara has not yet confirmed this.

Turkish troops, backed by warplanes, attack helicopters and artillery, have been fighting Kurdish guerrillas at close quarters as they advance on fortified caves. Reuters, Dow Jones

"Turkey is engaged in a legitimate fight against a terrorist organization which has challenged Turkey's peace and security," its deputy said his AK Party in parliament, adding that Turkey respects Iraq's territorial integrity.

Erdogan said on Tuesday that Turkey was receiving intelligence cooperation from the United States.

The Turkish General Staff said on Tuesday two more of its soldiers had been killed, raising the total in 19. It says at least 153 PKK fighters have been killed. PKK statements that 81 Turkish troops have been killed could not be verified. Reuters

NY Philharmonic gets muted reaction in Korea

PYONGYANG—THE ORCHESTRA-format concert of the New York Philharmonic made the rare lil's front pages on Wednesday but no North Korea received only brief mentions in the state-controlled daily.

North Koreans, more used to music that extols the virtues of their leaders, gave a standing ovation to the performances by the oldest US orchestra on Tuesday night in a concert both sides had said they hoped would ease tension between the long-time Cold War foes.

Many musicians spent their final day in Pyongyang watching North Korean school children do song and dance numbers that praised the fatherly love of the North's revered president Kim Il-sung and his son Kim Jong-il.

A story on the concert was on page four of the communist party newspaper Rodong Sinmun with a picture of the event. The front page was reserved for news that leader Kim Jong-il had sent congratulatory flowers to the new president of Cuba.

The newspaper report on the concert was heavy on who among the North's elite attended and called the concert "very enjoyable and memorable." Silent Night's revered Christmas carol was still giddy from the concert as they boarded a chartered 747 jumbo jet with international journalists, US officials and supporters that took them on a flight of about 50 minutes to Seoul.

"I don't think I could ever say that we have been moved so deeply by the response and the feeling coming from audience. It is beyond what we ever expected," said Juan-Pablo Johs Dvok.

Some orchestra members met North Korean musicians, while others headed to the Mangyongdae's birthplace of Kim Il-sung and his son Kim Jong-il.

A story on the concert was on page four of the communist party newspaper Rodong Sinmun with a picture of the event. The front page was reserved for news that leader Kim Jong-il had sent congratulatory flowers to the new president of Cuba.

Philharmonic members were flanked in the audience by school children who were not allowed to talk to any foreigners. Reuters

Bhutto slay try suspect arrested

ISLAMABAD—PAKISTAN HAS arrested a suspected al-Qaeda militant who plans opposition leader Benazir Bhutto named before her assassination as one of those involved in an attempt on her life in December, a senior government official said.

Qari Saifullah Akhtar, who has been in Pakistani custody before, was arrested on Monday in the eastern city of Lahore the alleged plotter behind the October suicide bombing in Karachi that hit Bhutto's homecoming parade when she returned from exile, Interior Minister Hamid Nawaz said on Tuesday.

The bombing narrowly missed Bhutto but killed about 150 others. Bhutto was killed in a subsequent suicide attack on Dec. 27 in Rawalpindi near the capital Islamabad.

"He is involved in the blasts in Karsaz. Therefore he has been arrested," Nawaz said. The Associated Press, referring to the Karachi neighborhood where the October bombing happened. AP

MOTHER AND CUB. A one-day-old lion cub rides beside its mother as the Russian International Circus in San Salvador, on Feb. 26. Four lion cubs were born on Monday in captivity to the circus. AP

UN: Half of world to live in cities by end-2008

UNITED NATIONS—BY THE end of the year half of the world's population will be living in cities for the first time in history, the United Nations said in a report released on Tuesday.

According to the report, by the year 2030 there will be 4.9 billion people living in cities, up from 3.3 billion now. The world's total population is expected to rise to 8.2 billion in 2030 from the current 6.7 billion.

The world's most developed regions—Europe, North America and Oceania—have for some people in cities than in the countryside, as do Latin America and the Caribbean. Africa and Asia are exceptions but have many of the world's people.

As urbanization increases, the world's total rural population is expected to begin declining around a decade and should fall to 2.8 billion people in 2050 from 3.4 billion in 2007, the report said.

Some countries, like India—home to two of the world's biggest metropolises, Mumbai and Delhi—will be 19 million and 18.6 million people respectively in 2007—aim to slow down urbanization by encouraging development of rural areas.

Despite the challenges urbanization poses for governments, Hania Zlotnik, head of the UN Population Division, said cities are "engines of growth."

"Urbanization is often a sign of a lively economy.

"Governments would be well advised that urban growth is a proof of economic dynamism," Zlotnik told reporters.

Still, intense urbanization and the expected addition of eight new "megacities"—cities with 10 million or more inhabitants—by the year 2025 will pose new challenges.

Governments need to make sure huge urban populations have access to basic services, above all health care, Zlotnik said.

Asia and Africa are still mostly rural but will see booming urban populations over the next few decades. Both have around 40 percent in cities and 60 percent in the countryside now.

But this is steadily changing. Half of Africa's population will be in cities by between 2045 and 2050 while Asia will reach that point between 2028 and 2033, Zlotnik said.

Around 48 percent of China's population is in cities now, a figure that is expected to exceed 50 percent by 2008, when over one billion people will be living in Chinese cities, she said.

By 2025, China's booming foreign investment center Shenzhen, suburb London Hong Kong, will join Beijing and Shanghai as China's richest megacity with 18.2 million people, the UN report projected.

The world's second most populous country, India, has only 29 percent of its population in cities at the moment. By 2050, India will have 55 percent of its people in urban centers.

"India is expected to urbanize much less than China and there Kim 103 expected to remain the country with the world's largest rural population," Zlotnik said.

But India will get two new megacities to join Mumbai and Delhi by 2025—Calcutta, which will have an estimated 20.6 million people, and Madras with 10.1 million. Reuters

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Ibarra

Burma outlaws speeches, leaflets vs referendum

RANGOON—ANYONE WHO DISTRIBUTES leaflets or makes speeches against Burma's (Myanmar) constitutional referendum can be imprisoned for three years under new rules governing the May vote, published by state media on Wednesday.

The Constitutional Referendum Law also allows for voting to be postponed or canceled in places affected by a "natural disaster, security breach or other harm that could endanger the holding of a free and fair referendum."

The law, enacted on Tuesday and published in Burmese language dailies the following day, carries a three-year prison term and fine for anyone who makes speeches or distributes leaflets to disrupt the voting process, the newspapers said.

Monks, nuns, high-ranking Christian and Hindu officials, the mentally ill, people living in exile, convicted felons and foreigners are not eligible to vote under the law.

A 45-member Referendum Governing Commission—made up mostly of representatives of the country's ethnic minorities—and its sub-commissions will announce the ballot date three weeks ahead of time and supervise the referendum, the newspapers said. Votes will be counted before at least 10 eligible voters and one commission member. There was no mention of independent observers being allowed to oversee voting or ballot counting.

Burma has long been under international pressure to make democratic reforms, particularly since it violently crushed peaceful pro-democracy protests last September. The United Nations estimates at least 31 people were killed and thousands more were detained in the crackdown.

On Feb. 9, the military-ruled government made public its plans for the referendum—the first time the junta has set any date for a step in its outline announced "roadmap to democracy." If the commission is extended, the junta has said general elections will take place in 2010.

A committee hand-picked by the military completed the text of the draft constitution on Feb. 10.

The ruling junta has been widely criticized over the drafting process. The military invited the opposition National League for Democracy to join, but because pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi was still in detention, the party boycotted the process. The NLD won a 1990 general election, but the junta refused to let it take power. AP

Thailand braces for Thaksin's return today

BANGKOK—THAILAND, TRYing to recover from two years of political turmoil, is bracing for the return on Thursday of ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra from 16 months in exile with his battle against an array of opponents far from over.

Rivals ranging from the royalist establishment to street-protest leaders will confront Thaksin after a coup and an army-appointed government failed to clear his popularity, as demonstrated by the general election in December that put his supporters back in power, analysts said.

"The crisis shows they have managed to weather the coup d'état and the junta has been blown up so far (ineffective," said Chulalongkorn University political scientist Duangkamol Chongkittavorn.

Despite allegations of jostling over rampant corruption by the generals who ousted him in a bloodless 2006 coup, Thaksin faces only one outspoken charge, although prosecutors are deciding whether to bring more.

Newspapers and Thaksin opponents said last week's removal of the Justice Ministry official supervising a probe of Thaksin suggests he is unlikely to see the inside of a court.

Suspicion was rife, they said, that the coalition government formed by Thaksin supporters following a December general election was eager to make the charges go away despite promising to let justice take its course.

The removal of the official prompted the leaders of the massive anti-Thaksin demonstrations in Bangkok in 2006 to threaten to go back in the streets if they believed that was really happening.

"Future street protests depend on the government's actions and Thaksin's," said protest leader Sondhi Limthongkul.

Thaksin is due to surrender himself to police at Bangkok airport on Thursday, then go to the Supreme Court to seek bail on a corruption charge relating to his wife's purchase of a prime piece of Bangkok real estate while in office.

He denies the charge. Reuters

Drug-resistant TB seen at record levels globally

WASHINGTON—CASES OF tuberculosis that defy existing drugs are being recorded globally at the highest rates ever seen, with parts of the former Soviet Union especially vulnerable, the World Health Organization said on Tuesday.

In a report based on data from 81 countries, the WHO estimated nearly half a million people a year worldwide become infected with a form of TB resistant to two or more of the primary drugs used to treat it. That number accounts for about 5 percent of the nine million new TB cases annually.

Extensively drug-resistant TB, the form that is hardest to treat, was seen in 45 countries and may be present in others because only seriously limited data was available from Africa, the UN health agency said.

"This is no Dunkirkian lever... the world is not taking this epidemic seriously," Dr. Mario Raviglione, director of the WHO Stop TB Department, said in a telephone interview. "What the report shows is simply that we are in big trouble in many parts of the world."

Parts of the former Soviet Union—Russia, Azerbaijan, Moldova and Ukraine...were among the countries hit hardest by drug-resistant TB.

Raviglione attributed this to years of socioeconomic deterioration, dismantling of public health systems, poor living conditions and other factors. Reuters

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WHAT'S INSIDE

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Pacquiao training hardest ever

Filipino star's weight down to 135-136 lb

By Ray Lorca

IT'S SUBZERO COLD IN LOS ANGELES, BUT Manny Pacquiao continues to push hard in training for his rematch with Juan Manuel Marquez on March 15.

"So far, my preconditioning programwent according to plan. I'm confident I'm even endured in my camp," said Pacquiao in a phone patch interview yesterday. "Ang pinaghirapan ko na ngayon (I'm already very close)."

According to Pacquiao, he now weighs between 135-136 lb, losing two pounds after undergoing a punishing 30-lb regimen of daily training, instead of his normal 25-26 rounds, for a week.

Tuesday night, Pacquiao opened for 11 rounds at trainer Freddie Roach's Wild Card Gym in Los Angeles and intends to come at no 12 on Thursday and Saturday for him to reach his goal of 130-140 rounds of sparring.

Nearly 18 days before Pacquiao-Marquez II is held at the Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino in Las Vegas, the Filipino ring superstar is firm up. It was the super featherweight bout while Marquez is lighter at 130 lbs.

"Nobody losing diet (It's really cold here)," said Pacquiao, hoping that he, accompanied by World Boxing Organization lightweight champion Gerry Peñalosa and Eduardo Gale, did an early morning jog around the hilly La Brea district in Los Angeles, resulting as far as shall record, Pacquiao said the temperature is 5A A 45 degree Fahrenheit (7.2 Celsius).

Pursued by enthusiasts to host Marquez, the 29-year-old Pacquiao refused to predict a knockout victory during the press conference jointly hosted by GMA Network executive vice president and CEO Gilberto Duavit Jr. and Solar Entertainment president Wilson Tieng at the GMA executive lounge.

"Mahirap magsabi, ang importante manalo (It's hard to say, what's important is to win)," said Pacquiao, during the press conference. Tieng knocked home to long 45-knockout record just be a bonus!

Though Bob Arum, president of fight copromoter Top Rank, stresses by Pacquiao's confidence to reach the World Boxing Council super featherweight title from Marquez, he didn't guarantee a Pacquiao victory.

"I like Manny's chances, but he's in for a very tough fight with Marquez," said Arum in an online interview with boxingtalk.com. "I'm hopeful about the result."

Lightweight champ Diaz

If Pacquiao beats Marquez, he'll move up to lightweight and challenge WBC champion David Diaz, who is also seeking for title against Ronnie Montano on March 15 in the chief undercard of Pacquiao-Marquez II. Diaz also needs to beat Montano for his planned showdown with Pacquiao on each through.

Pacquiao is slated to hold a media workout on Wednesday (Thursday in Manila) in San Francisco as part of the promotions for Pacquiao-Marquez II.

"Sir (Pacquiao) wants to move up and try to continue collecting belts and I want to test myself against the very best and that's what that's still him," said Diaz, "So best tribute to iconic Ronnie today. Didn't Montano twice already has the favor with Marquez, Orzt (Daniel Ubiquez, Elieser Castro and Ginger) Ilo. He's been on quite a run, if he defeats Marquez on March 15, maybe he's the best fighter in boxing."

"We're expecting a good win from David. If he wins and Pacquiao wins we're looking to do a huge event on June 28 as a PPV show from Macau and Pacquiao will fight for the lightweight title," Arum told Boxingtalk.

Meanwhile, fight fans are expected to train out for Pacquiao's media day in San Francisco Wednesday. Pacquiao, Roach and Filipino trainers Ridzy Bernardo and Nonoy Nye will phone in from Burbank, California to San Francisco, for the open workout at the Thomas Tenning Center. With a report from Inquirer.net, Jaguardino

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TWO-POINT DEDUCTION

Canlubang leads by three

By Ernesto A. Gonzales

BACOLOD—CANLUBANG LOST TWO points on a rule infraction and settled for a three-point lead over perennial rival Manila Southwoods Wednesday in the first round of the 42nd PAL Interclub tournament at the Bacolod Golf and Country Club course in Bredco, Murcia.

Paired by Jhomel Madrid's 26 points on a medal score of par 70 and a 34 by local Joey Huevos, Canlubang posted a four-man total of 133 and what was supposed to be a five-point margin over Southwoods, which got going with a 137 aggregate.

But the defending champion team from Laguna was deducted two points after officials found that fifth man Jamie Boy Gadiat, whose 27 points did not count, broke the pick-up rule by writing a 40 instead of an 8 on his scorecard on the par-4 second hole.

"It hurts but we have to live with it," said Canlubang team captain Luigi Yulo, whose boys are bidding to complete a club record three triple championships double.

Mario Labaje contributed 32 points and Peter Villaber added 30 to complete the scoring for Canlubang, which was deducted by one (1) point behind leading championship reference to 15.

Doha Asian Games1 Gene Bordoc assembled 31 points for Southwoods, which is seeking to duplicate the feat of its only two wins achieved here in 2003. Rodito Antito added 34, solicitor Jun Ilan 33 and Rodel and Sergio Barrameda scored last with 24 27.

Del Monte, the five Mindanao team to win the tournament in 2004, stayed in touch with the two front runners as expected on the strength of a 137 by Arsenio Montilla and the 33 of Ramay Alunan and rookie Leonard Lubinao.

CANLUBANG'S Pete Villaber tries to coax in a putt.

The final score in Del Monte's 123 output was a 69 by Romeo Jamole.

Under the cup-format first qualifying round pulls away in the second round, the Manilite by the newcomer Gadiat could be decisive in the end. The team lost to Southwoods by only two points three years ago following two consecutive incidents that deprived Canlubang of four points in the final round.

A four-way fight shaped up in the Founders division where ex-base Negros grabbed a one-point lead over defending champion Cebu and Mactan Island with a 149 total. Sta. Elena was a close fourth with 167.

Meanwhile, Ilog Maravilla of the Bulletin won the two-day medlin golf tournament by 18 strokes over Emie Gonzales of the Inquirer with a 136 total Tuesday. Rodolfo Hernandez of the Inquirer and Lito Tarugan tied for third at 153.

The first round scores:

CHAMPIONSHIP—Canlubang (-2) (Jhomel Madrid 70, Joey Huevos 63, Jamie Boy Gadiat 27, Jun Ilan 33, Peter Villaber 30, Mario Labaje 32) 133; Manila Southwoods 137, Del Monte 123, Negros 149, Sta. Elena 167, Mactan Island 149, Cebu 149, Bacolod Golf 157, Bacolod City 161, Bredco 162, Bacolod Country Club 164, Bacolod Golf 167, Bacolod Golf 169, Bacolod Golf 171, Bacolod Golf 173, Bacolod Golf 175, Bacolod Golf 177, Bacolod Golf 179, Bacolod Golf 181, Bacolod Golf 183, Bacolod Golf 185, Bacolod Golf 187, Bacolod Golf 189, Bacolod Golf 191, Bacolod Golf

LPAA

PhilCycling airs side on riders' complaints

By Ronnie S. Zamora

THE PHILCYCLING, THE COUNTRY'S National federation for bike sports, is asking a group of cycentering riders to file their complaint with proper authorities to get to the bottom of an equipment controversy regarding the more recent Southeast Asian Games in Thailand.

In a press release sent to media offices, PhilCycling said it is encouraging "investigations on the acquisition of bicycles and equipment the government purchased for the use of cyclists who competed in the 24th Southeast Asian Games in December 2007."

PhilCycling president Red Lim said the federation will actively participate in the investigations provided they are conducted by proper bodies.

The announcement comes at the heels of a statement by a group of cyclists who have accused the federation of not properly distributing to them bicycles and equipment worth P12.2 million. The cyclists maintain that the bikes used during the SEA Games were overpriced.

PhilCycling, in the statement, clarified to cyclists the issue.

PhilCycling said it "recently made reconciliations to the Task Force for the 24th SEA Games, an ad hoc body composed of representatives from the Philippine Sports Commission (PSC) and the Philippine Olympic Committee (POC), for the bicycle and equipment requirement for the Thailand Games."

Initially, the PhilCycling requested for P5.2 million in bicycles and equipment, but the Task Force drastically cut it to P1.8 million because of financial constraints.

With a little haggling, PhilCycling managed to raise the Task Force financial commitment to P2.2 million but it still needed to "make necessary but equally drastic adjustments in the specifications of the equipment."

The PSC took over from there, specifically in the canvass and bidding and eventually in the awarding process. The PhilCycling, for its part, merely monitored the progress of the acquisition especially on the delivery dates as well as to the conformation to specifications of the equipment purchased.

The PhilCycling does not get direct financial assistance from the PSC. All bicycles and equipment, including uniforms, from the PSC go directly to the cyclists and coaches.

PhilCycling has gradually improved the country's performance in the SEA Games. From the one gold medal won in Vietnam in 2003, two gold medals were clinched in 2005 and this was doubled to four gold medals in the 2007 Thailand edition.

Bowling starts to rebuild

By Mac Anthony Reyes

WITH SO-PLATED ASSURED OF OUTRIGHT slot, the rebuilding of the national bowling team starts March 1, according to new head coach Nico Valderamos yesterday.

Mid-seven reigning Mindanao champion Ethney Rivera will have a free ride when the national coaching staff holds six-day eliminations on March 1 and 2 and March 6 to 9 at the Green Valley Lanes in Pasig.

"Everybody must play because we are starting from scratch," said the 28-year-old Valderamos, who set aside his law studies and teaching job after being named member of the coach.

The PSP bowlers are hoping to score victories in three major tournaments this year—the Malaysian International in March, Asian Championships in July in Hong Kong and the World Men's Championships in August in Bangkok.

He said the March 1-2 event will have players listed 42 games per day on long oil and short oil patterns, respectively. Three men and two women will qualify from the first round.

Then the top seven and top six women will emerge from the March 6-9 phase where aspirants will bowl six games per day following the PBA format of singles, doubles, trios and Team-of-Five.

Open order is graded and open bowlers are of latest listing of the Philippine Bowling Congress, aspirants can contact Archie Perez at 0910-8201426 for details.

Lizardo settles for silver; champ ousts tough Alora

By Jess Navarro

SEOUL—JOHN PAUL LIZARDO fell short of climbing the gold while Kathleen Bonifacio Alora failed to pull off an upset against a reigning world champion in the 52-kg Taekwondo Individual Tournament here Tuesday.

Pinned against an equivocal ruling by a head, Lizardo gave Spain's Joel Gonzalez second spending moment before the 6-foot-1 Spaniard escaped with a 2-1 victory in the finals of the men's 58-kilogram category at the University of Science and Technology Beijing Gymnasium.

The 21-year-old Lizardo furiously engaged Gonzalez in a fight battle that was deadlocked until the Spaniard's wayward kick connected squarely on the left side of the Filipino jaw but with barely a measurable left in the contact.

That earned the Spaniard two points and allowed him to grab a 2-0 edge.

Lizardo retaliated and quickly earned a point as coach Roberto Cruz signaled him on from the sidelines.

Gonzalez, however, wisely eluded Lizardo's attacks until time ran out to end the stiff.

"I almost had it (gold)," said Lizardo, who played through the recurring pain in his left instep.

Alora also had the 10-man Smart Power PP taekwondo team building to benefit for a moment after pulling off an upset over overrated seventh Mgm gold medalist Wu Jing Yu, who won the gold in the 2006 Doha Asian Games and the 2007 World Championships.

Alora, who lost to Wu in the semifinals of the Asiad, dominated the Chinese world champion before Wu clobbered on an kick which the judges thought landed on Alora's head.

"That kick landed on my shoulder but the judges thought it hit the target because I lost my balance," said the 20-year-old Alora, who dribbled to Wu, 5-1, in the quarterfinals.

According to women's coach Raul Barcena, Alora will managed to produce the same competitive form in her bronze-medal match with Zhou Zhou Mei but her short but kicks proved ineffective against the style-open attacks of the Chinese.

JAPAN'S Ryoga Ushimura (left) and Filipino John Paul Lizardo vie for kicks during their gold medal match.

'Reef race' listing ends today

THOSE INTERESTED TO JOIN AND EXPERIENCE Cowboys Race for Tabbonbon have until noon Thursday, Feb. 26 to register. Slated this Sunday at the Bridal City in Tagaytay City, the race which is open to all running enthusiasts and fitness buffs, aims to create funds for the preservation of the Tabbonbon reef in Dasmariñas.

Up for competition is the 5K, 5K, and 10K runs. Registration fee is P350. At stake is a total of P300,000 for the top three overall finishers of the 5K, 5K and 10K events. Those interested may register at the ground floor of the Imagine Medispa Plaza, Bldg. at 51 Aguinaldo St. in San Juan. For further inquiries, one may call tel. no. 7279907 or log on to www.runfitness.com.

According to Raul Patrick Concepcion, vice president-service, Concepcion Industries, Inc., the top three finishers male and female of the 10K run will receive P15,000, P10,000, P5,000 and 15,000 respectively plus trophies. The 5K top finishers male and female will receive P7,000, P5,000, P3,000 respectively while the 5K top finishers male and female will receive P5,000, P3,000, and P1,000 respectively. Trophies will also be awarded to the 5K and 5K top finishers. All finishers will receive a commemorative Tabbonbon t-shirt and bottom.

ONE OF the logos on bags and shirts that the race will give away to finishers.

Boncit, ex-national champ Diaz top Milo GenSan leg

GEN. SANTOS CITY—JUNEL BONCIT OF Tagum City captured his third leg championship of the season while 2004 national champion Sarah Diane Diaz of Davao City earned the fastest time last year in the continuing qualifying run of the 32nd National Milo Marathon series.

The 28-year-old Boncit, the defending champion, beat hero three Olympian Eduardo Elmer Buenaso of Bonga City by 35 seconds, posting a winning time 1:04:03. Nahed Widagdo came in third at 1:12:37.

Boncit shook off Buenaso in the last five kilometers of the 21K race to bag the P30,000 prize.

Diaz, 26, raised the distaff side with a time of 1:24:05.

Meraldine Ambosa, who won here last year for her sixth leg victory overall, placed second this time at 1:26:47 while Merlie Ribalbalin was third at 1:31:28.

All top three finishers of each leg earn points for the 42K national finals on Nov. 30.

"Medyo nahirapan ako sa 11 hour a little difficulty with) yung umuulan dahil natatakot ang [athletes] dumausdos [Yes] hirap [ako] mag isip [because] [fear] [athletes] [slip] [hard] [to] [think]," said Diaz, who last month placed fourth in a Clark leg and won a Subic race a week after. "Alabart na lang at ambisyon ngayon, ayaw na kawalan ng [It's a good thing there was a change, causing was quite a harvest]."

BONCIT, Buenavista

For more details, visit our website at www.hondaph.com or call (632)811-4788 loc. 1660 Look the Poker or Ruby

SPORTS

Rockets buck Yao injury; Suns shine

Miami finally gets victory No. 10

HOUSTON—THE HOUSTON ROCKETS OVERCAME THE LOSS OF All-Star center Yao Ming in a season-ending foot injury on Tuesday to record their 13th straight victory with a 94-89 home rout of the Washington Wizards.

"I had a feeling we were going to come out with a lot of effort. I just felt this team has really been building," Houston coach Jeff Adelman told reporters.

"Losing Yao was a shock to them today but we've still been talking about how we overcame," he said.

"We just [have] to go out and everyone has to put in the effort like we did tonight and continue to win."

Luther Head scored 18 points and the Rockets, who found out Yao would be out for the rest of the season because of a stress fracture of his left foot, cruised against the injury-depleted Wizards, playing without stars Gilbert Arenas and Caron Butler.

The Rockets have won all four one-sided ball games.

This winning streak is the longest by the Rockets since their 2003-04 championship season. It also matches the longest streak of the NBA season.

Tracy McGrady, who joined Yao on Rockets' 1-2 punch, suffered through a 2-for-11 shooting effort in the first three quarters before adding 4 point of three baskets in the fourth to finish with 13 points.

The Rockets ended the 41-year-old Dikembe Mutombo in place of Yao, with DeMarcus Nelson starting at the

In East Rutherford, New Jersey, the Orlando Magic won its third straight with victory over the Nets, 103-93.

Hedo Turkoglu scored 25 his 20 points in the fourth quarter as Orlando ran its streak of 100-point games to nine. The Magic extended its lead atop the Southeast Division to 9 games.

In Memphis, Tennessee, Jerry Stackhouse had 20 points and 13 assists as undefeated Phoenix's 127-113 crushing of the Memphis Grizzlies.

Shawn Marion scored 24 points on 10-of-14 shooting and Udonis Haslem added 17 for the Heat, who won for just the second time in their past 20 games—and did it in style, with their largest margin of the season.

Miami held Sacramento to 30 percent shooting (9-for-30) in the third quarter, a Heat franchise record. The Heat held a 31-11 edge in that period, the first time in more than a year Miami outscored a foe by at least 20 points in a quarter.

In Los Angeles, the Lakers won a match tonight marked by hosting the Portland Trail Blazers, 96-85.

Kobe Bryant scored 31 of his 30 points in the fourth quarter, and the Lakers held the Trail Blazers to 39 percent field goal shooting.

The win kept San Angeles a game clear atop the Pacific Division and Western Conference.

In Oakland, California, Monta Ellis scored 30 points to lead Golden State past Seattle, 105-99.

Andris Biedrins added 14 in the decisive third quarter without missing a shot for the Warriors.

Reuters, AP O'NEAL: Rest game with Heat

NSBC: Cebu squads still unstoppable

By Calvin Cordova
Cebu Daily News

CEBU CITY—CEBUANO TEAMS CONTINued to reign in the 2006 National Students Basketball Championships (NSBC) as they remained unbeaten in the Basketball Association of the Philippines' equivalent tournament.

University of the Visayas pocketed its third straight blowout victory after trashing University of Perpetual Help, 99-57, yesterday in the Cebu Coliseum.

Hasty Von Lanete, Ace Lacuna, Gregory Dumapias and Patrick Demetrio all scored in double figures to lead UV, which swept the three-game elimination round by an average margin of 46 points.

University of San Carlos, on the other hand, was in front two games, beating International Competition Architecture School of Business, 90-67, before upping University of Mapúa yesterday, 82-75, at the Minglanilla Sports Complex.

Southwestern University then notched its third straight triumph, 94-92, over defending champion Angeles University Foundation.

The four Cebu teams are already assured of quarterfinal slots.

Olympics can reform China's rights record

LONDON—HUMAN RIGHTS WILL BE strong in China, thanks to the Olympic Games being hosted there this year, claimed a senior International Olympic Committee (IOC) official on Tuesday.

Former IOC director general Francois Carrard told the BBC that had the Games not been awarded to China—they beat off opposition from Toronto, Canada, after one of Toronto in 2008—then there would be no chance of human rights evoking there as the spotlight would not have been focussed on them.

"If the Games were not awarded to China the (human rights) situation would not improve, unquestionably," the former lawyer who is now legal advisor to the IOC, told the BBC. "This is a contribution to progress, in a novel-sounding factor."

China's human rights record has come under increasing scrutiny in the Western approach with their support of the Sudanese government and the Mugabe regime, believing external not only by human rights groups but also athletes.

China, one the closest allies of the Sudanese government and its racist arms supplier, has come under intense and widespread international criticism over its ongoing atrocities in the province of oil-conflict in Darfur. AFP

Harbour, Noosa dispute PBL Lipovitan lead

THEY BOTH DREW FIRST BLOOD, it's time to go toe-to-toe for supremacy.

Five-point-seeking Harbour Centre and returning Noosa Shoot Center a top today to determine which team gets to be elated the rest in the PBL Lipovitan Asian Sports Cup at the Ateneo Agoncillo College gym in Manila.

Harbour downed San Mig Coffee 69-67 in Saturday's marquee tilt, but it was Noosa Shoot which made back-to-back after its lone known hiccup shocked Burger King, 73-63, also on the same day.

The opening day losers, San Mig and Burger, collide in the other game, hoping to secure a first ever win.

Harbour coach Jorge Gallent said their desperation for opening victory, he is still not satisfied with his team and hopes to see more improvement against Noosa.

"Playing as a team? I'm still not convinced," said Gallent, who vowed to "distribute the ball among his players so long as they learn how to distribute the ball among themselves."

But the Shoe Store are armed with solid teamwork and players like John Wilson, Jamel Vincoy and Allan Evangelista who are determined to make a name for themselves.

Jun Mig Coffee's Reuben Canoy-dia will suit up after recovering from a hurting knee. He's expected with 23 points but had to be pulled out after slamming into Connecticut Samaniego.

The Whoppers will be bannered by Marco Arellanos, Mike Reyes, Sherry Bored and Rhod Melo.

More doubleup Reyes.

STILL THE BEST! The St. Scholastica's College Senior display one of their winning routines that gave them a seventh straight WNCAA cheerleading crown. Miriam College and Centro Escolar University placed second and third, respectively.

UNITY CUP

Juvic grabs lead with flawless 67

ANTIPOLO—ADAM TONY STAR Jarin Paguinan uncorked a 4-under-par 67 yesterday to swipe a one-stroke lead over Ginoo Villaroz, the defending champion of the PGAP Unity Cup at the challenging south course of Valley Golf.

The 29-year-old ex-caddy from Bacolod smoked his back nine with a 32 to surely unseat a three-stroke overnight deficit and put himself in position towards winning a second straight local tournament with a CDI superposts.

Paguinan won the 6th The Country Club Invitational in convincing style last month and the way he conquered the 7,180-yard course, the title of three PGAPoints in the past, has left most in the field wondering if he is back in that tournament form.

Villaroz closed out bogey-bogey to hold the lead, his 71 giving him a (9) over-shoot of Sorry Dolor Ordoñez, who fired a 68 for solo third place at the moment, but well in the hunt for the P300,000 top prize and up by five points to Bolobolotupot Sin Tan-gum.

A candidate for the Asian Tour's Rising Star award, Paguinan opened up his strong home with three straight birdies before gunning down another one on the par-5 17th.

And while he was out-foot, Villaroz couldn't keep pace as a long delay working for their second shot to the 17th green got him off the groove for the first of three closing bogeys.

PAGUINAN BOUND

Unheralded Hans Quiachon was good for a 70, while Elmer Solvendo scrambled a 71 to tie for 3rd, a stroke ahead of tournament host Ayala Alabang's Adam Tony regular Antonio Lascuña, who fired a 73 and 72, respectively.

Shawn Domondon, the former amateur hotshot who has yet to truly figure prominently in a pro event, turned in his version of a 68 to end seven off the medal at 140 like former 6P Open winner Robert Peñaloza, who salvaged a 69.

IN THIS ISSUE

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BUSINESS

Editor Raul G. Maronilla • Assistant Editor Carmel S. Reinoso

Mail us your feedback: inquirer.net/cgi-bin/mailpage.cgi?B1 Editorial: (02) 896-6000 E-mail: business@inquirer.com.ph

Peso surges to 40.33:$1 on strong inflows

Analysts also cite waning political jitters

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PESO YESTERDAY SURGED TO 40.33 against the dollar, its strongest level in eight years, as economic political jitters seemed to fizzle out while regional currency markets anticipated further US interest rate cuts, currency traders said.

"It's mainly because political concerns have waned. Everyone was worried before Friday because of the long weekend and as the days drew on, the market's fears that something will happen declines. So the sentiment has turned positive again for the currency," said Ronaldo Gotuaco III, treasurer of EastWest Bank and president of Foreign exchange association ACI Philippines.

Gotuaco said the retirement from the influential Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines—which stopped short of calling for President Macapagal-Arroyo's ouster—also helped ease jitters on domestic political troubles.

The local currency opened at its intraday low of 40.45 and closed at its peak of 40.33, thus gaining 14 centavos from Tuesday's closing of 40.47 against the greenback.

The peso's new trading of its highest level against the dollar since touching 40.13 on Jan. 18, 2000. It broke past the previous eight-year high of 40.40 seen earlier this month before rebuffs thrown Jun Ivanda started to weigh on the bullish sentiment over reading the national broadband project.

Volume at the Philippine Dealing System totalled to $1 billion, or more than double the previous day's $404 million, as dealings

PESO to

Rubbing alcohol firm cements claim on 'Family' trademark

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY OFFICE yesterday announced that it has decided in favor of rubbing alcohol firm Pagoda Philippines Inc. regarding a dispute with mineral water company Universal Canning Inc. over the "Family" trademark.

IP Philippines director general Adrian S. Cristobal Jr. said the agency dismissed a petition for registration of the trademark by Universal Canning, saying the latter's mark was "identical or closely resembles" that of Pagoda.

The agency also ruled that Pagoda was the first filer of an application for registration of the Family trademark for products that fall under the same classes of goods as those applied for by Universal.

According to IP Philippines, Pagoda first registered the Family trademark on April 13, 1992, with subsequent registrations of the trademark and its other variations.

RUBBING to

BDO posted ₱6.5-B net profit in 2007

BANCO DE ORO UNIBANK INC. (BDO) reported an audited net income of ₱6.5 billion in 2007, 2 percent higher than 2006 level of ₱6.4 billion. This was based on the consolidated statements of BDO and the former Equitable PCI Bank (EPCI), which merged effective last May 21, 2007.

The bank said the result was lower than the bank's income guidance of P7 billion due to non-recurring expenses related to integration and the settlement of cases under the EPCI's abandonment program.

It said net interest income rose 11 percent to ₱21.4 billion given a better loan and deposit mix. Gross customer loans grew 15 percent, driven by high-demand for higher margin consumer loans, despite the flat movement in net loans and other receivables, which settled at ₱51.1-0 billion. Total deposits declined by 3 percent to ₱646.4 billion despite the healthy growth in low-cost deposits as the bank held it reduced its dependence on high cost funding.

Non-interest income declined 4 percent to ₱16.9 billion as gains from fee-based income were offset by lower treasury and other income. Service charges and trust fees jumped 14 percent to ₱5.8 billion with larger contributions from branch banking, remittances, credit cards, cash management and bancassurance. Trading and foreign exchange gains decreased to ₱4.6 billion given poorer market volatility.

Whiner takes it all

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Bernal III

HOW COME, WHEN TWO COMPANIES are bent on each other in the courts over some muddled-up gross mining claims, the public must always bear the suffering?

Let me cite as an example the current tiff between the Lascuña and the Tanchay groups over some 200 hectares of nickel mining claims in Palawan.

The fight even spilled out to some important personalities in their own administrations, pitting Secretary Angelo Reyes against one senator.

For many years, as I was saying, the Lascuña group's Rasimora Metals Group Corp., under an operating agreement, was happily working on the mining site of another company called Dalaguete Nickel.

Early last year, all of a sudden, the Tanchay group (which now employs three different corporations in that court room media battle) inserted itself between those two companies.

The Tanchay group and Olympian Mines simply agreed just by themselves that, henceforth, they should just license Platinum Metals out of the mine site.

Never mind that Platinum Metals actually put up the multimillion peso road network to make the mine productive.

Surely enough, the ensuing court cases between the groups forced the closure of an otherwise productive mine.

And did those two companies get away? Well, only Platinum Metals. Its revenue stream from the Palawan mine suddenly stopped.

As for the biggest winner of them all, the newcomer Tanchay group, they had nothing to lose in the controversy. Zero. Zilch. Nothing. They were, in a way, the chain jumpers. They had not invested in the mines. They just probably wanted to take it all.

But to me the biggest losers are the people of Palawan, and to a certain extent, the rest of us, the citizens of this dark-ridden republic, every man, woman, and child.

For example, because the mine ceased operations, the local government of Palawan were denied some ₱6 million in income for 2007 alone.

Believe me, for a place like Palawan, that's a lot of money.

The national government also had to forego in 2007 some ₱12 million in excise taxes alone from the Palawan nickel mine.

Add to that the ₱50 million in yearly corporate income tax of Platinum Metals (for the ROI lost last year because of the mine's closure).

The people of Palawan of course suffer more because the closure meant that the province gave up some ₱35 million in yearly payroll of the mine.

In my language, ₱35 million is a lot of spending power, not to mention that the mine—if it were in operation—could have bought supplies from local businesses worth about ₱24 million in 2007 alone.

That's most probably the reason why Palawan Gov. Joel Reyes wanted the mining operation to resume, and because of this, he invited court suits from the Tanchay group.

Look at that—if you really want to do mining business in Palawan, well you really want to fight the governor, who is the closest to being a god in any province!

Hmmm. Methinks somebody just does not want the nickel mine to reopen.

Meantime, the people of Palawan suffer.

* * *

BITTERSIE as girls, I just found out from the fantasy publication The Asian Banker that the profit margin of the country's top 10 commercial banks, the members-sized favority bank, is none other than the treasury division.

Only eight years ago—or in 2000, according to the report, the division accounted for only 10 percent of the bank's total revenues. Again, that's total revenues.

Last year the treasury already brought in 45 percent of the bank's total income. Now, we are already talking about "income."

Head of the division is a 38-year-old named Raffy Aquino, who has been in the treasury for the past seven years, now serving as the bank's treasurer.

Insiders say that Security Bank broke down its treasury into teams of some 40 specialists, each sticking to just one single product line.

In other words, that is how the bank fights the gigantic global banks—both local and foreign. You know—through specialization.

Reportedly, the unit posted year by growth of about 50 percent in the past eight years, and it now has the third largest share of the treasury business in the country.

No wonder some foreign (and also local) banks raid Security. Without much ado, thank you, they just started to steal the visionary people of Security Bank. Nerve, eh?

* * *

A PRESS RELEASE(sent from the Consumers Service Insurance Systems says that about 99 percent of its active members already have the "eCard Plus."

That's the electronic system similar to ATMs and credit cards, which the GSIS used to speed up delivery of benefits to its members. You know—the plastic culture.

Based on GSIS figures, only a little over a hundred thousand of its members (out of about 1.3 million) were not yet enrolled in the eCard Plus system.

What happened to those members? I mean, are they hiding in outer space?

From what I gathered, the GSIS mainly offers rebates mostly on its provincial units to propagate the good word on the eCard. Those units performed; others did not.

As tribute to the GSIS personnel for a job well done, here are the places with 100 percent for Batangas, Leyte, La Union (with Bicol, Lagayan, Palawan), Pampanga, Southern Tagalog, Manila and Caloocan, Davao, Dumaguete (with Negros), Central Bataan, Kidapawan, Misamis, and Roxas.

The others apparently are waiting for Christmas or cold weather.

* * *

OVER AT THE Club Special Economic Zone, the top hotel Holiday Inn just announced that it now offers lunch at the Brazilian barbecue restaurant called Rodizio for only ₱299 per person. Now I bet all you can?

Anyway, the treat is available from Thursday to Sunday only.

Here is the catch: free reservation is ... well, "recommended". Holiday Inn Clark telephone number is (632) 845 1888.

BMHI

Bank Management and Holding, Inc.

INVITATION FOR PROPOSALS

For the Disposition through
Long Term Lease of Lots 1A1, 3F and
Portion of Lots 4B and 5B
Pamayanang Diego Silang, 13 Brgy. Cutcutan, Tarlac City

The BCDA Management and Holdings, Inc. (BMHI) invites interested proponents to participate in the Bidding for the disposition of Lots 1A1, 3F, and portions of Lots 4B and 5B of the Pamayanang Diego Silang (PDS) 13 Brgy. Cutcutan, Tarlac City through long-term lease of an aggregate area of more or less 21,307 square meters.

Interested proponents may submit their Letters of Interest to the BMHI and may purchase the "Terms of Preference (TOR) for the lease of Lots 1A1, 3F, and portions of Lots 4B and 5B that outlines, among others, the requirements that will enable proponents to participate in the disposition through public bidding of the said property.

The TOR/Information Kit will be ready for distribution to interested proponents by 27 February 2008 at the BMHI Finance Department. A non-refundable cost of the TOR is Ten Thousand Pesos (Php10,000.00) per set payable to the BMHI in Cash or Manager's Check.

A pre-qualification conference among interested proponents is tentatively set on 12 March 2008 at 2:00 p.m. at the Conference Room of the BMHI Office. The objective of the conference is to discuss the property, the TOR and other clarifications from interested proponents. Interested proponents shall be informed of any changes in the schedule or venue of the conference through contact numbers submitted to the BMHI.

Interested proponents can direct their inquiries to:

The Chairperson
Asset Disposition Program Committee
BCDA Management and Holdings, Inc.
BCDA Corp. Ctr., 2/F Bonifacio Technology Center
31st St. corner 2nd Ave., Bonifacio Gig.
Taguig City

or they can call at telephone numbers 816-0600 and look for Mr. Ned Villareal, Asst. Gracie S. Rubio and/or Ms. Liberty Prado de Leon.

GLORIA ONTIVEROS Ed. (RES.)
Chairperson
Asset Disposition Program Committee

BMHI-Ad-2-2008

JOB Vacancy

Sale of problem-ridden Palinpinon plant uncertain

STILL UNSURE WITH PROBlems regarding the geothermal power concession contract (GPPC) to be awarded to it, the PNOIL (nonprofit Philippine geothermal power plant has been scheduled for bidding in August.

This weekend, however, is still bringed on the decision of the Joint Congressional Power Commission regarding the plant's GPPC.....a critical component of the sale as this will give the buyers the SENSITIVE of steady steam supply for the generation facility.

Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. said the final line-up of National Power Corp. plants to be auctioned this year would depend on the JCPC's decision on the GPPC issue, which could be the long-term steam supply agreement to be attached to the Palinpinon plant.

If the JCPC approves the proposed amendments, PHALM will proceed with the auction of the 112.5-MW Tongonan and Palinpinon geothermal plants as a package, as in last year's plans.

If the original GPPC will be retained, however, PHALM will follow its 2006 privatization proposal, which will entail the handing of the Power plant with the 22-MW Bohol plant and the sale of the Palinpinon facility as a separate plant.

While assuring the JCPC's decision on the Palinpinon GPPC, PHALM said it was now preparing the preliminary assessment for the 8.6-MW Amlan hydropower plant in Negros Oriental as well as for the 49 diesel-fired power plants that had been lined up for auction this year.

This would enable interested investors to begin their due diligence as soon as possible, PHALM said.

Bold on having its 79-percent privatization target for Napocor's assets this year, PHALM has some one such as privatization timetable for the year, with the first asset to be sold in May.

Under the newly approved 2008 privatization program, the first asset to be privatized is the marinat Isnak this year would be the decommissioned 225-MW Tanauan thermal plant in May.

This being a retained power plant, however, would not be included in the computation of the 70-percent privatization targets.

First to come in the target will be the 747.5-MW Pinat, Malaban facilities in Albay, Laguna and Batangas, which have been scheduled for auction in June. Also to be sold in June is the Amlan hydropower plant.

Abigail G. Ro

Stocks rise on bargain-hunting

From page B4

city's biggest company by market value, rose ₱0.60 to ₱2.895, making the strongest gain in the American Depository Receipts.

Megaworld jumped 21 centers to ₱2.32 while Ayala Land Inc., the nation's biggest property developer, advanced 30 centavos to ₱32.

Philex Mining Corp. rose 10 centavos to ₱6.90.

Food and drinks giant San Miguel Corp.'s "B" and "A" shares were both steady at ₱50.

JFP

Office of the President of the Philippines
PRESIDENTIAL MANAGEMENT STAFF
Malacañang

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Office of the Executive Presidential Management Staff (PMS), through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), hereby invites all interested contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the Procurement of the following:

Name of Project	Procurement of Computerized Electronic Air-Ride Suspension System for Presidential Motorcade	
Location	Malacañang Palace, Manila	
Approved Budget for the Contract	Three Million Eight Hundred Fifty-Two Thousand Four Hundred Pesos Only (₱3,852,400.00)	
Source of Fund	Office of the President Budget for CY 2008 (Regular Budget)	
Terms of Bid Validity	120 Calendar Days	
Period of Delivery	45 Days	

Prospective bidders may obtain further information regarding the project and/or the Bid Documents from the BAC Secretariat, Room 305, 3rd Floor, Malacañang Palace, Manila, from Mondays to Fridays, during office hours. Bid Documents may be purchased upon payment of a non-refundable fee of ₱5,000.00 to the BAC Cashier, Room 305, 3rd Floor, Malacañang Palace, Manila, and upon presentation of the Official Receipt issued by the BAC Cashier.

The BAC will conduct a Pre-Bid Conference on March 5, 2008 at 10:00 a.m. at the Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Malacañang Palace, Manila, which is open to all prospective bidders. Bids must be delivered to the BAC Secretariat on or before 10:00 a.m. of March 19, 2008. All bids must be accompanied by a bid security in the form and amount stipulated in the Bidding Documents. Bid opening shall be on March 19, 2008 at 10:00 a.m. at the Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Malacañang Palace, Manila. Bids will be opened in the presence of the bidders' representatives who choose to attend the activity.

The PMS reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive any formality therein, or accept the bid most advantageous to the government.

For more information, please refer to:

1.	Mr. Ned Villareal	Asst. Gracie S. Rubio
2.	Ms. Liberty Prado de Leon	
3.	Bids and Awards Committee Secretariat 2/F Malacañang Palace San Miguel, Manila Contact Nos.: +632 735-1416 to 20 loc. 3305	

Only the duly accredited bidders shall be allowed to submit bids. Bidders must submit their Mayor's/Business Permit, PhilGEPS Certificate of Registration and Membership, and Tax Clearance per Executive Order No. 398, Series of 2005 as eligibility documents.

Bidders are required to submit a sworn statement in accordance with Section 25.3 of RA 9184 and its IRR, stating that they are not blacklisted or barred from bidding by the government.

The PMS guarantees the confidentiality of the bidding process and shall maintain a strict conservation to protect the integrity of the procedure.

ALL ABOUT EQUIPMENT & SERVICES
Corporation, Manila

Date: 22 February 2008
Valid: February 28, 2008

Republic of the Philippines
Province of Palawan
City of Puerto

BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE
INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

February 27, 2008

The City Government of Puerto, through the Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), hereby invites all interested contractors to apply for eligibility and subsequently bid for the following projects under the Fiscal Year 2008 Appropriations:

1. Name of Project	DEVELOPMENT OF BARANGAY CHURCH TRAINING SCHOOL
Location	Barangay Tiniguiban, Brgy. San Manuel, City Proper
Approved Budget for the Contract	Php 867,713.00
2. Name of Project	PROVISION, DEVELOPMENT, FOR BRGY. HEALTH STATION, TUBBATAHA
Location	Brgy. Tagburos, City of Puerto
Approved Budget for the Contract	Php 1,000,000.00
3. Name of Project	CONSTRUCTION OF RURAL HEALTH UNIT
Location	Brgy. Langogan, City of Puerto
Approved Budget for the Contract	Php 1,000,000.00

For more information, bidders may refer to Mrs. Lilia G. Galarion, Chairperson, BAC Secretariat, Tel. No. (048) 433-2335 local 2335 during office hours from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

Bidders may obtain the complete set of Bidding Documents from the BAC Secretariat upon payment of a non-refundable amount of TWO THOUSAND PESOS (Php 2,000.00).

Schedule of Activities:

1. Posting of Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid	February 27, 2008
2. Deadline for the submission of Letter of Intent (LOI) and Eligibility Requirements	March 5, 2008 at 10:00 P.M.
3. Eligibility Check	March 6, 2008 at 1:30 P.M.
4. Notification and availability of Bidding Documents	March 8-11, 2008
5. Pre-bid Conference	March 12, 2008 at 10:00 A.M. in Conference Rm. 2/F/ "Dr. Pedro Dimaano" Bldg.
6. Deadline for the submission of Bids	March 26, 2008 at 10:00 A.M.
7. Opening of Bids	March 26, 2008 at 2:00 P.M. at Conference Rm. 2/F/ City Government of Puerto

Bidders shall be assessed on their eligibility and their qualifications based on the requirements specified in the Philippine Government Procurement Reform Act (R.A. 9184) and its Implementing Rules and Regulations.

The City Government of Puerto reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to waive any minor defects therein, and to accept such bid as may be considered most advantageous to the city government.

Signed
ATTY. JEFFREY C. ARAS
Chairman, BAC

Peso surges to 40.33:$1 on strong inflows

From page B1

money poured into the local market in line with the upbeat sentiment across regional currency markets.

Cabarrus said the peso would likely rise further and breach the new record level of 40.00:$1 within the next six months.

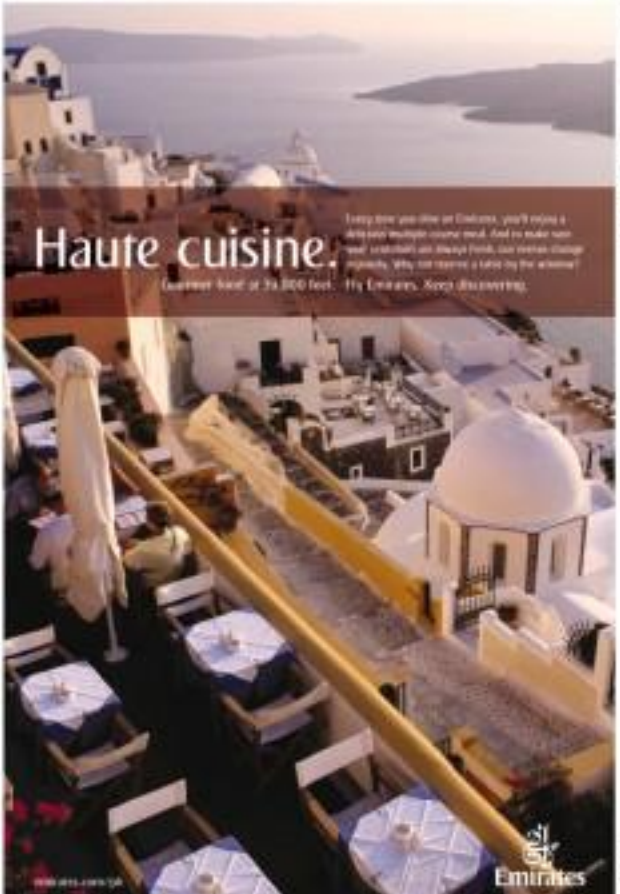
With the dissipating political jitters, Cabarrus said the market was starting to focus back on local economic fundamentals. He added that corporate demand for dollars was not too strong while the dollar was weakening against major currencies.

Across the region, other Asian currencies also rallied against a broadly weak dollar on prospects of further monetary easing by the US Federal Reserve. The Singapore dollar, Malaysian ringgit and Thai baht each enjoyed Asian currency crisis highs yesterday as foreign funds flowed back to Asian emerging markets in search of higher yields.

Banko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Amando Tetangco Jr told reporters that foreign inflows were heavy yesterday due to remittances from overseas Filipino workers, fresh equity placements by foreign portfolio investors and export receipts.

In his speech before the Makati Business Club and the Management Association of the Philippines, Tetangco said 2007 was a remarkable year for the Philippines, but 2008 may not turn in as bright a picture for a "purely" local story.

"But we certainly have built up buffers that would allow us to press on the road ahead of us," he said.



GMA 7 sees 20% growth, ₱665M in expenditures

Network executive expects a good year, says airtime numbers are up

By Rose T. Cleofas Jr.

GMA NETWORK INC.'S TOP LINE and bottom line for 2007 are expected to exceed 2006 figures by 20 percent, prompting the listed media conglomerate to program more than P665 million in capital expenditures for 2008, chief Felipe Ysmael said.

"Our revenue in January and in February were up 20 percent each month," Ysmael said. "We will likely grow by at least 20 percent this year. I cannot say exactly ... it could be more.

"(In fact) QTV we hope it will break even this year. There was still income loss for last year, but we managed to cut it in half. Free TV is still our biggest growth driver, of course."

Traditionally recent business, one final year is followed by a good year. There had been some bad years, so this year should prove to be very good. Even our airtime numbers are up."

Ysmael noted that the TV ratings war is still ABS-CBN, GMA and sometimes business, and may have even contributed to its stronger performances, though he declined to say for sure.

Late last year, GMA reported that its income for the first 10 months of 2007 jumped 22 percent to P2.06 billion.

Year to date, the company's airtime revenue reached P6.95 billion, a 7-percent improvement from a year earlier.

For 2008, Ysmael said GMA's capital expenditure will not be less than P665 million.

The company had announced earlier this year that it earmarked P665 million for an infrastructure expansion program in response to signal in the countryside.

"The expansion projects, which started in 2005, cover TV transmitter upgrades and facilities for live coverage," company vice president for engineering Leo Bonville said in an interview in January.

Scheduled for completion this month are transmitter upgrades in General Santos (P23 million), Naga City (P16 million) and Batangas (P25 million).

Ysmael, senior vice president and chief operating officer Gilberto Duavit Jr. said the network hopes the resulting boost in reception will improve its viewership ratings nationwide.

RP open to moderate risk in global slowdown

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE OVERSEERS, SUPPORTED BY robust revenues, remittances and domestic demand, is having modest risk from the expected slowdown this year of the world's three largest economies—the United States, the European Union and Japan, according to Zurich-based Credit Suisse.

In the Swiss bank's February research titled "G3 slowdown: Asia's least and most exposed economies," authored by G3 economists Gem Bonnaccorsi and Gabe Tee, the Philippines—along with India, Taiwan, Malaysia and Thailand—was placed in a category where economic growth and policy flexibility were seen "as some risk" due to the expected slowdown of the G3 economies.

China and Indonesia were cited as the most resilient "least at risk," while newly industrializing Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan were categorized as the ones "most at risk."

The G3 report said it would be difficult to make sweeping generalizations on Asia's emerging economies except that they are entering an uncertain period with strong momentum in domestic demand.

"Export and growth risk exposures may vary widely depending on financial and budgetary and the policy capacity and willingness to respond to downside risks," the report said.

But G3 said Asia's emerging economies had not in any way shrugged from the G3, citing that trade linkages with these large markets had grown—with China large markets had grown—with China large markets had grown—with China

2GO president and CEO Subic M. Abaya introduces Supply Chain Management to the students of Jose Rizal University.

2GO, JRU link up to train masters of supply chain

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

GETTING A PRODUCT FROM THE manufacturer's factory to the supermarket shelf or the neighborhood sari-sari store is rarely more complicated than it sounds.

Manufacturers first have to make sure that it produces just enough and not thousands—any more and it may have to deal with the problem of excess and expensive inventory. Or vice versa, they have to move those goods from its site to major distribution centers in Metro Manila and the provinces.

Being an archipelago, distribution poses an even bigger challenge because manufacturers such as Universal Robina Corp., Unilever and Procter & Gamble will have to deal with delivering products by ship from one island to another.

From there, manufacturers have to deal with the final challenge of getting the product to the supermarket or sari-sari and this can't exist given the bad condition of roads in many parts of the country.

All of these steps involve costs, and the challenge posed on manufacturers and retailers distribution of goods from overseas is to bring down these costs through the proper management of the supply chain that links these different processes.

Unfortunately, companies in the Philippines are just starting to learn the value of supply chain management, taking their cue and following the examples of multinational companies that have been practicing supply chain management for much longer given the global scope of their business.

Thus, most of the experts in the industry today are just learning the intricacies of supply chain management through experience, and trial and error. There are but a few of them to go around.

Realizing the importance of giving more Filipinos trained in supply chain management, 2GO, a member company of the 100-year-old Aboitiz Transport System group, tied up with the Jose Rizal University to introduce a new course in Bachelor of Commercial Science, Major in Supply Management—this June.

The course aims to prepare students to assume roles as supply management professionals in profit-making and not-for-profit organizations.

The program—of study emphasizes the demand and replenishment, purchasing, logistics operations and customer service dimensions of the fields in supply management.

At the end of two years, the students can be given a Certificate of Completion to certify his readiness to assume entry level positions in supply management. Graduates of the four-year course can be placed in higher positions.

CORPORATE CITIZEN

Potential jobs include materials data analysis, inventory analyst, warehouse manager, supply chain coordinator, purchasing/procurement officer, demand planning analyst and inventory planning and control analyst.

2GO CEO Subic M. Abaya said during the launch of the program with JRU and Society of Fellows in Supply Management last week, that 2GO decided to focus on supply chain management because of the broad range of capabilities required to be good at it and its importance to making local firms competitive.

2GO itself needs supply chain experts to fulfill its mandate to provide supply chain solutions to its growing roster of clients.

"From just a cargo shipping firm, 2GO has diversified its business into logistics warehousing and logistics supply—all vital parts of the supply chain process.

"While it is part and parcel of any business, there is currently no formal training or education to ensure professionals," Abaya said. "Most practitioners in the supply chain industry got their expertise from experience, by simply being on the job, learning by rapes."

"If we are to help our country lower its supply chain cost, making us competitive, we need to start educating our youth. This is the future and we cannot wait one."

As part of JRU's curriculum for the program, Abaya said that 2GO, together with the group foundation, Aboitiz Group Foundation Inc., will offer scholarships for 10 students who want to take up the course.

2GO will offer the scholarships for the next four years and will pay for the full four year course of each scholar, generating an expenditure of P1 for 2GO alone.

JRU is just the first school that 2GO will partner with. More schools will be added to the list as they take interest in providing the supply chain course.

The logistics company hopes to get even more students interested in the supply chain management course, given the dire need for such professionals.

"As the world gets smaller with globalization, it is increasingly important to arm our youth with the proper education making you globally competitive," Abaya said. "Through this course, we will help develop core competencies required for the jobs. We have the knowledge and experience, and we want to work together for a better future."

PCA stops cutting of coconut trees, out to curb illegal logging

THE PHILIPPINE COCONUT AUTHORITY has ordered a stop to the cutting and transport of coconut trees to curb illegal logging.

PCA Administrator Oscar G. Garin said the moratorium on the issuance of permits to cut and transport coconut trees would take effect on March 10, to give "displaced" workers ample time to seek alternative livelihood sources.

"We will implement this moratorium to arrest the ever increasing and unabated incidence of illegal cutting," Garin said, underscoring the need for stricter regulations to stop the illicit practices of unscrupulous coconut lumber traders.

Under Memorandum Circular No. 02-2008 dated Feb. 11, 2008, all issuances of Permits to Cut Coconut Trees (PCCTs) and Transport Transportation of Coconuts would be suspended nationwide.

PCA said the cutting of coconut trees would only be allowed in case the trees pose a threat to life, limb and property, are damaged by typhoons in designated calamity areas, will be used by a farmer for housing or animal shelter and only up to five trees, and if there are in areas authorized for conversion.

The memorandum likewise restricts the long-distance transportation of coconut lumber.

According to the PCA, coconut lumber may only be transported within the province and with the use of small vehicles such as jeepney or pickup, with a maximum load capacity of 2,000 board feet of coconut lumber approximately four 20- coconut trees.

"One major objective is to discourage long distance hauling to allow law enforcers to easily identify the illegal transport of coco lumber," Garin said.

Garin warned that violators of Republic Act No. 8048 and the rules and regulations issued by the PCA face a stiff penalty fine of not more than imprisonment, or a fine of P50,000 to P500,000, or both.

"The conservation of existing coconut trees is paramount to our objective of increasing coconut production to meet the growing demand for coconut products," Garin explained.

Amy R. Remo

Japan property sale on hold

Squabble among buyers leads to court injunction

By Michelle V. Ramos

DEVELOPMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S property in Hampshire district in Tokyo, Japan, has been put on hold after a Pasay City Regional Trial Court issued an injunction, the Department of Finance yesterday said.

The 30-year lease and development contract involving the prime 2,400 square meter property in Japan was awarded last year to Nagayama Estate Corporation. The group earlier said it would invest 1.7 billion yen in the development of the property.

But a squabble between members of the consortium led to confusion as to who should accept the contract on behalf of the group. After presenting a special power of attorney, consortium partner Tsuchiya intended the contract on the group's behalf.

But consortium partner Nagayama went to court to contest the granting of the contract to Tsuchiya. The partner also warned the Philippine government to get back the contract from Tsuchiya. Nagayama said it was the rightful recipient of the contract.

"The Hampshire project is now on hold," Teves said in a statement. "If that court has issued an injunction preventing further government action on the matter until the resolution of a private dispute between members of the consortium that had won the bidding."

The DOF earlier considered rebidding the property in Japan so it could generate revenue from the sale of the asset right away. But the government would not proceed due to legal problems. The Nagayama-Taisei consortium already paid the government 600 million yen in development fee.

The Nagayama-Taisei consortium won over Japanese Ikoh Urban Development Corp.

The government had been working on the privatization of its property in Kamppi-dal for as long. Another property, the Philippine ambassador's residence located in Fujita district, is also up for privatization this year.

The government has set the bidding for the Fujita property on March 6.

The government hopes to raise P20.9 billion from its privatization activities this year. The revenue will aid the government in its goal of posting a balanced budget.

Another asset to be sold this year is the property of state-run Food Terminals Inc. in Taguig City.

In January, the government raised about P8 billion from the sale of its 18 percent stake in Manila Electric Co. The Meralco shares were sold to the Government Service Insurance System.

DA sees P26B worth of deals with Dubai

By Amy R. Remo

THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE expects to seal P26 billion worth of supply contracts and investments with Dubai-based firms.

The deals concern the export of Philippine green fruits and processed food products.

Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap said that, with the DA-led trip to the United Arab Emirates, he expects to revive a dormant agriculture and fishery cooperation.

Primarily, Yap is set to sign with his counterpart a pact that will pave the way for new financial grants from Dubai for Philippine projects aimed at boosting farm production in the Visayas and Mindanao.

The agriculture chief's run in the UAE is likewise seen to answer earlier commitments by GMA firms to buy P6 million worth of agricultural and processed food products from at least 50 Filipino export companies.

Another agreement expected to be signed during the trip is for concrete nearly $500 million for the export of fresh Cavendish bananas and sweet pineapples to the UAE.

Firms that have committed to these contracts include Fresh Fruits Company, Del Monte Fresh Middle East, Sunstar and Abbot Dairy Trading.

The DA will also sign two memoranda of agreement, one of which would be with Fresh Fruits Company, which plans to invest $50 million to develop at least 3,000 hectares of Cavendish bananas and sweet pineapple plantations in Mindanao.

Fresh Fruits is one of the top trading companies in the Middle East, with over 50 years of experience in importing and exporting fresh vegetables in the region.

Another MOA would be with Dubai Morghab Holdings (Saudi Group of Companies) for agriculture and fisheries cooperation, particularly on joint ventures in growing bananas, pineapple and mango in the Philippines.

Yap said the signing of a new agreement on Agriculture and Fisheries Cooperation between the Philippines and the UAE would further open some P700 million worth of UAE grants in banked-rural development projects in Mindanao.

"This agreement will be significant because it will open doors for the Philippines ... to develop the rural agriculture and fishery sectors, especially on the establishment of a Halal Zone in the Philippines," Yap said.

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Editor Aries Espinosa

Antel Spa Residences well positioned for tourism boom

THE CURRENT GROWTH OF TOURISM, which has risen by 4.46 percent since last year and has enabled for a shortage of hotel accommodations below 8,000, will soon be met with the emerging Full Service Residential Suite (FSRS) condos, spearheaded by the highly anticipated Antel Spa Residences (ASR).

Recently lauded by the Department of Tourism, the Cagayan 2Day country residential condo project that will soon rise in the province's historic CBD concept pioneered by the developmental firm, making it in prime position to service the influx of local and foreign tourists who continue to visit and enjoy the sights and sounds of the country.

"Antel Spa Residences already takes into account the necessary facilities and personnel needed to service hotel-style guests; what is a great departure from the norm is that at residential condo model. As such, foreign and local guests who are used to living in hotel with 4-star service will be able to enjoy the type of services that they always look for when they visit the country," Gaston said.

"In many ways, Antel Spa Residences has much more to offer guests than other 5-star hotels. Aside from our in-house regional lifestyle facilities, our guests enjoy a lot of privileges plus the space and ambiance of a home-inspired condo home which are not found in cramped hotel room accommodations," said Gaston.

ASR is also more than just a five-star living icon in Makati Avenue, as it is set to become the commercial and convenience district of choice among foreign businessmen and local traders. With a state-of-the-art convention center nearly tucked in its warmest premises, luxury, convenience and hospitality are now imbued in one great location.

Local businessmen can soon do away with frequent hotel-to-convention center travel as they can avail of ASR's reasonably priced hotel accommodations, which are also strategically clustered with nearby conference and convention facilities inside Antel Corporate City. It also has direct access to major thoroughfares like Makati Avenue, Buendia, Ayala and Edsa.

ASR is part of the sprawling Antel Lifestyle City thus offers exciting facilities, like the 3-Venue Event Mall, soon-to-be one of the best locations for entertainment and leisure options such as dance bars, clubs, coffee shops, themed bistros, and a 3000 sq. m. international standard events hall; and A. Venue Residences, also an FSRS residential tower.

As early as now, Antel Land Holdings has tapped Ceriatic Hotels & Resorts Corp. to oversee the hotel-side operations of ASR. According to Ceriatic president Miguel Gregorio, the rising trend to accord the importance of employing highly-trained personnel to service hotel accustomed guests, ASR is well suited to become a world-class business location and hospitality hub in the years to come.

With versatile hotel functions and prime business and leisure facilities, "guests and residents will never have a better option at ASR. Here, they can blissfully lounge in absolute style and comfort — the kind of luxury that they always look forward to whenever they visit the country," Gaston noted.

For inquiries call 896-6666, log on to www.antel.com.ph, or visit The Antel Venue Lounge at 5345 Gen. Luna St. corner Makati Avenue, Makati City.

SUN LIFE PHILIPPINES BAGS ANVIL AWARDS

The 43rd Anvil Commissions conferred Sun Life Financial - Philippines' "The Sun Today" employee journal with an Anvil Award of Excellence under the Internal Audience category, and Sun Life's "SLA Who" marketing campaign audio-visual presentation with an Anvil Award of Merit. The Anvil is the top most prestigious honor conferred by the Philippine Association of Communicators in the Philippines, awarded by a distinguished panel of communications practitioners and professionals.

Sun Life Financial - Philippines' Corporate Communications Head Lisa Ann Ferrer-Ong (left) and Employee Communications Manager Rosel Lilioso, receive their Anvil Awards for Sun Life's "The Sun Today" employee journal and "SLA Who" marketing campaign audio-visual presentation, respectively, from Philippine Association of Communicators in the Philippines President Ms. Ma. Victoria Ramos.

The Anvil Awards honor outstanding communication programs and materials developed and implemented in the past year. The award is given out annually by the Public Relations Society of the Philippines in honor and recognize the best PR practices in the country. Receiving the awards for Sun Life are (from left) money and marketing support manager Irene Ramirez, multimedia artist Cy Reyes, PR/Print coordinator Rosel Lilioso, senior manager for corporate communications Jayb Lising, and PR specialist Julie Nuestro.

K2 DRUG SIGNS UP 3RD FRANCHISEE

K2 Drug, an expanding chain of drugstores offering good service across both branded medicines and quality generics, as well as convenience-store products, has signed up its 3rd franchisee for Guadalupe, Makati and Mandaluyong, Robert Photo stores from right: Kye Sangalang of JE Sangalang Corp. (franchisee for Guadalupe and Makati), Fatima Lobo, president of K2 Drug and Meg Lanjaca, Treasurer/CEO. K2 Drug now has 14 stores including its recently launched Mandaluyong branch across Ayala Hospital and Magallanes Interchange and soon-to-open Inc. Las Piñas and Cubao. For inquiries on the K2 Drug franchise, contact (0920) 933-4242 or e-mail k2drug@yahoo.com.

METROBANK DONATES SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Aurora Technologies Foundation, Inc. (ATI) received a donation from the Metrobank Foundation in support of its scholarship program for indigent students who will join the province of Quezon. Metrobank Foundation executive Antonio Ortiguero (second from left) presents the donation to ATI founder Sen. Edgardo Angara (center) as former light Angara said the money will be used to provide 30 scholarships under all 10 technical and vocational courses in Computer Hardware Servicing, Hotel and Restaurant Services, Personal Computer Operations, Consumer Electronics, and Electrical Wiring. Also witnessing the donation are Metrobank chairman Arthur Ty and Metrobank president Arthur Ty.

IABC Asia Pacific confab

THE INTERNATIONAL Association of Business Communicators (IABC) Philippines has lined up top level CEOs and business and public sector leaders to address its Asia Pacific Conference on March 3-5, at the new Hyatt Hotel in Manila and Boracay Regency Hotel for its base. IABC World Director Todd Hunter from Seattle, Rich Mathieson of IABC India, Sreenivas Hitlow of IABC Hongkong, and branding guru Martin Roll of Singapore will join some 25 endorsed and appointed speakers and presenters, including officials of eight ABC chapters from Asia Pacific countries. More than 100 delegates and executives of some 70 companies will participate in the three-in-one conference which is highlighted by the Excellence Awards at the Hyatt and ends with the inaugurating competition "Sing Young" at Boracay Resort, a place can be made through tel. nos. 702-4567, 756-0555 or abc_philippines@yahoo.com.

James Hardie fetes 10th year

JAMES HARDIE PHILIPPINES CELEBRATED its 10th year in the Philippines recently at a recent dealers' conference held at the Discovery Suites. It features meetings for Shapes and Miniatures dealers and Monetor Sale at the Mandarin Hotel in Cebu. Company executives, top dealers and friends gathered in an evening of intrigues, fun and camaraderie. Greeting the event were James Hardie Philippines executives led by general manager Edel Casey, supply chain director Alan Yap, and sales and marketing director Jamie Rondon Jr. Finance director Jason Hermitaño and HRDE director Michelle Hermitaño. Commemorating 10 successful years of partnership, the event served to underscore the mission of James Hardie to market and manufacture high quality fiber cement products for the local and regional markets. Over the years, the company invested heavily in marketing activities to meet the Filipinos' need for better, safer, and longer-lasting buildings and homes.

HRM, org dev't courses at St. Benilde's SPuCE program

THE SCHOOL OF PROFESSIONAL AND CONtinuing Education or SPuCE program of De La Salle University's College of St. Benilde is set to begin academic courses on human resource management and organization development. According to the College of St. Benilde, human resource management and organization development are increasingly growing in importance in corporations. Both professions, admit-deal with human capital and behaviors, contribute enormously to the competitive edge of companies and employee performance. The human resource management and organization development courses at St. Benilde's SPuCE program are conducted in partnership with leading organization development and human resource management consultancy and training company Manila Enterprise Development Consulting. Professionals interested in the human resource management and organization development courses may call the College of St. Benilde's School of Professional and Continuing Education or SPuCE at (02) 526-0426, (02) 526-0427 or (02) 526-0428. SPuCE is located at the College of St. Benilde's Rooms 1206 (School of Design and Arts Campus, 71 Duncan Street, Manila.

JOHN ROBERT POWERS' 7TH SHOWCASE 2008

John Robert Powers held its seventh exclusive invitational activity-certified fashion show that showcased the potentials of its graduates before a distinguished talent managers. This is an activity the school is continuously pursuing to provide its students the opportunities and investment exposures in building their dreams come true. The event was held Jan. 31, from 8 to 9:30 p.m. at the Cultural Theatre Auditorium, Podium 4, Ortigas Center, Pasig City. For more information, call Ms. Pearl Avenue, Makati City. JRP students showcased their talents in fashion, modeling, runway, fashion print, TV commercial, acting, singing, and dancing. This activity is similar to the International Modelling and Talent Association, the only competitive talent search held annually in New York every year where students of John Robert Powers

FFPPC HOLDS MEDICAL, DENTAL MISSION

The Philippine Federation of Private Print Companies celebrated the 78th Printers Day anniversary recently with the Medical Consciousness Week and the National Migrant Sunday through Medical and Dental Missions to Kalookan. For FFPPC, the 3D marked the celebration with the 7th Annual Print-based Communications Week. For the Catholic in Philosophy, this was a day to remember our kababayans who are working overseas as migrant workers. Thus, FFPPC Chairman Willy Lim and Mr. Rey Ong with the directors joined by the biggest number of OFW families - the Avendaño-Cruz of Kalookan. The celebration started off with a National Migrant's Sunday, a mass at the Sampaloc Elementary School gymnasium. This was followed by the medical and dental missions for the underprivileged members of the community. Around 1,500 adults and kids sought the free medicines as well as the medical consultation and health information services. The medical and dental missions is a collaboration effort of FFPPC, Avelo Plans, DEDP-ASEM Biopanda Dental, St. Jude the Redeemer Parish, Mad'Pro Inc and CCC Dentists.

Affordable eye surgery for senior citizens, Philhealth members

HAVING YOUR CATARACT REMOVED MAY BE MORE AFFORDABLE than you think especially if you are a senior citizen or a Philhealth member. According to Dr. Jade Arroyo, president of the Ameritrust Eye Center, many people who have eye problems are hesitant to go to an ophthalmologist for fear that the cost of the procedure would be exorbitant. That's the common misconception among eye patients. They would delay consulting with their eye doctors even if their vision start deteriorating because they fear that getting appropriate treatment would require a lot of money, he said. "What they do not realize is if they are Philhealth contributors, a big chunk of the expense is taken off their bill. And if they happen to be senior citizens, as well, an additional discount of 20 percent awaits them. Normal cases, our patients in Ameritrust Eye Center end up paying only half of the total bill due to various privileges," Arroyo said. Theoretically, there are about 3 million estimated beneficiaries members who make monthly contributions to Philhealth. Many of them, said Arroyo, are not aware of their privileges as Philhealth subscribers. "A number of them are only aware that in the event of hospital confinement, Philhealth will take care of their room and board. And that's it. Many of them do not know that they can use their Philhealth benefits for outpatient care such as removal of cataract or the treatment of other eye diseases," he said. Statistics show that cataract is the leading cause of blindness in the Philippines today, accounting for around 57 percent of all cases of unilateral and bilateral blindness. Various studies peg the number of Filipinos suffering from cataract blindness at 600,000 to a high of 800,000 persons. Eye-sight problems such as cataract, errors of refraction, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, neuro-ophthalmology, cornea external diseases, low vision, age-related macular degeneration and pediatric ophthalmology. Among others, Philhealth members can avail of cataract removal in all Ameritrust Eye Centers located at 5th level of Shangri-La Plaza Mall, Edsa cor. Shaw, Mandaluyong City, tel. no. (02)638-0782 or cellphone 0917-4,000 MB.

Product Files

Magnolia serves 'Japanese'

BY PEDLICIOUS ARMIE. SUSHI AND JAPAN-MADE CAKE. there's another reason to love things Japanese: Say "Mochi ewshi" to Magnolia's latest frozen delight. Mochi' in Japan, mochiko traditionally eaten on New Year's Day (and is also enjoyed throughout the year. The gooey goodness of this dessert has red-bean paste encased in a soft, pounded sweet rice dough, which is then dusted with cocoa powder. Magnolia's version of mochi is a blend of yummy ice cream balls wrapped in glutinous rice. The Asian-inspired ice cream is now available in locally made flavors. Dessert connoisseurs like myself say cream are usually overpriced or specialty restaurants. With Magnolia, one-of-a-kind ice cream treats like mochi are now available for the enjoyment of many. Retail only. P68.00 per 135gms; you'll say "Hanayuu very Mochi" over and over again. Magnolia Ice Cream brings irresistible delights to modern-era who grew up experiencing the brand's creamy-quality goodness, as well as to a new generation of ice cream lovers who are open to experiencing new frozen desserts. So go ahead and visit your favorite supermarket or grocery outlet nationwide for a taste of Magnolia Mochi! This is another quality product of San Miguel Corp.

Chippy's new Beef 'n Chili flavor

I WAS BORN OUT WITH THE MAYONNAISE GETS A NEW EXCITING twist as Jack 'n Jill Chippy introduces the latest addition to its line of quality-for-snacks, which will surely be another hit among today's crowd. Jack 'n Jill Chippy Beef 'n Chili combines Chippy's trademark hot grade corn grains with tasty beef flavor plus a hint of spice that adds zing to every bite. Chippy Beef 'n Chili is finely packed, giving it the distinct Chippy crunchiness people love. In addition to Chippy Beef 'n Chili, generation of Chippy lovers have been enjoying other Chippy variants including Chili & Cheese, Garlic & Vinegar, and the all-time favorite original barbecue flavor. Make barkada gatherings more fun. Head to the nearest supermarket, convenience store or your favorite sari-sari store and grab a bunch of the new Jack 'n Jill Chippy Beef 'n Chili and discover the goodness of a new and delectable snack companion.

Eco-friendly nail polish by Elena

THE EYES ARE NOT THE WINDOW TO THE SOUL BUT THE nails provide a good clue to the person's overall health. Brittle and discolored nails are the effects of prolonged exposure to solvent-based nail polish, making them look unhealthy. So against once known hazards, Elena nail polish distinguishes itself as eco-friendlies an attribute that is a lot less likely to be toxic to humans and the environment. Its main component is derived from natural resources. Vitamin E, keratin, glycerol are all released into every product formulation, and is touted to revolutionize nail cosmetic technology to the country. Named after Helen of Troy, whose name is synonymous with beauty, Elena Nail polish accentuates the contemporary quality of Troy, whose name is synonymous with beauty. Elena's kit designers really a head for the eyes. Fifteen combinations comes with a beach-applicable designed to slide perfectly on nail surfaces. All these are snugly fitted into luminous pink-colored boxes with dainty die-cut leaf patterns. Sleek, economical to use, and elegant comes up all the exciting features of Elena. Truly, consid-here is necessary for many reproductive reasons while stainless attributed a quality product. Attention-grabber way to healthy-looking nails with Elena! Choose from over the 100 colour collections to compliment your nail-color-defining lifestyle more. All Elena products are exclusively distributed by Beauty Concept Inc. For product inquiries, sales inquiries, call (02)725-7818 local or e-mail beautyconcept@hotmail.net.

Global Steel to diversify into iron, nickel mining, readies $1.6B

By Jerry S. Barros

STEEL MAKER GLOBAL STEEL Philippines is keen on investing in iron, nickel mining, with initial investments possibly amounting to some $1.6-billion, according to Environment Secretary Lito Atienza.

"Global Steel comes to mine for [their] materials to justify supply raw materials to its planned integrated steel plant in the country," Atienza said in an interview.

Formerly known as National Steel Corp., Global Steel earlier announced it was preparing to build an integrated steel plant, which will make the Philippines self-sufficient in steel.

Atienza noted that the Indian firm's interest in mining goes hand-in-hand with its wanting to look for sources of iron and nickel before it puts up its planned steel to ensure supply.

Global Steel, he disclosed, was also interested in putting up an integrated stainless steel mill.

The two steel mills would require a combined investment of as much as $4-billion.

"We hope Global Steel pushes through with its plans as there is tremendous interest and would therefore open greater benefits to Filipinos, in terms of employment for example," he said.

Global Steel, however, has not started exploring and was still looking for potential areas in which to mine and market.

According to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, there are no identified sites for iron in the country.

Among those revealed with Mineral Production Sharing Agreements, there are only five mining firms who have included iron in their list of potential commodities to be mined with in their respective areas.

Global Steel's Rajan Jalan is currently under the management of Global Ispat Holdings Ltd., one of the world's pioneering steel producers.

With integrated facilities, the plant operates hot rolling, cold rolling and tinning lines capable of producing more than four million tons of steel a year.

Meanwhile, Atienza said another firm has expressed interest in putting up an integrated steel mill in the country.

While there are no official commitments to date, Atienza said that Bukang Liwayway and Steel Co. of Korea has begun going around the country, scouting for potential ore areas, particularly in Surigao province.

Bukang Liwayway is the third largest steel producer in the world, operating two steel mills in Korea.

RP BPOs can compete at ₱25:$1, IPVG says

By Bea T. Chiongbian

OFFSHORING AND OUTsourcing (IMO) firms in the Philippines can continue growing even if the peso strengthens further, according to business process outsourcing firms.

The 5% economic slowdown in processing companies is effective, and with 05 workers paid five times more than a local worker, the Philippines would still be competitive even if the peso were to P35 against the dollar. But there are other risks rising in the face of a weaker dollar, that BPOs Business process outsourcing firms' much economists of scale to maximize their investments, and that they have for currency changes through hedging and cost management programs," IPVG CEO Enrique Quiambao said in a briefing Tuesday night.

Quiambao's prediction shared the forbearance of the outsourcing industry's other stakeholders.

"While it is difficult to establish a specific peso-to-dollar exchange rate at which the Philippines will no longer be competitive, [it's in global IMO] numbers, the data suggests a range of P35 to P37 per $1," Business Processing Association of the Philippines (BPA/P) CEO executive Rick Frank Ibon said in a statement.

In IDPO's recent survey of 62 companies conducted in cooperation with the Business Processing Association of the Philippines (BPA/P), it was found that BPOs generally maintained the impact of the stronger peso on their business and did not consider it to be a significant issue. This indicates that the competitiveness of Philippine companies has not been impacted to a large degree by the movement of dollar contracts against the US dollar.

In response to the question re-

garding the rate at which the company's services would no longer be price competitive, 2/3 percent of the respondents companies cannot that an exchange rate in the range of P39-42/$ would be the break point, 13 percent indicated P37-39/$, and 31 percent indicated a rate less than P35/$, with the lowest being P30/$.

The remaining 16 percent of companies did not indicate a rate.

That was a turnaround from early 2007, when BPO firms expressed concern over the effects of the strong peso and even asked government for help in the form of tax subsidies.

"The rapid rise of the peso has caught BPOs flatfooted... It caught us unprepared," Business Processing Association of the Philippines (BPAP) CEO Oscar Salazar said in June of 2007.

The sentiment currency has been surging since late 2006, fueled by overseas remittances, foreign investments, a generally positive economic outlook and the weakening dollar.

Respondents to the survey indicated that their actions in response to the peso's appreciation have been focused on the reduction of overhead costs and increasing billing rates.

There has also been some moderation of salary and benefit increases.

Other companies focused on increasing operational efficiencies and increasing productivity of their staff to counteract the negative impact of the peso's rise.

Represented in the IDP-BPAP survey were firms in contact center sector (31 percent), third party BPO (28 percent), captive BPO (26 percent), software (29 percent), other services, including medical and legal transcription, and animation (21 percent), as well as support services (19 percent) sectors.

BIR income tax collection up 13% in '07 to ₱426.4B

By Michelle V. Rama

THE BUREAU OF INTERNAL REVENUE COLlected 13 percent more income tax last year, but fell short of the target by 2 percent.

BIR reported that it collected P426.42 billion in 2007, up 13 percent from the previous year's P376.99 billion but 2 percent short of the goal of P433.12 billion.

The BIR was expected to easily meet its income tax collection last year due to the 7.3-percent rise in the gross domestic product, but the BIR said it failed to meet its target because of "factors beyond its control".

In a preliminary report submitted to the Congress oversight committee, BIR chairman Jose Mario Buñag expects sales held to hear this programmed collection of tax on income from bank deposits.

While the low interest rate environment was conducive for advancing investments, the BIR said it pulled down tax collection.

Buñag believes sales also led to drop in the collection of tax on income than government securities, the BIR said.

The 91-day treasury bill was expected to yield 4 percent when economic managers were setting the 2007 tax collection target, but the actual rate hovered only in the 3-percent level.

Income tax is the biggest revenue source among the tax types, accounting for about 60 percent of the BIR's total tax collection.

The shortfall in income tax collection last year could be offset by the BIR's failure to meet its collection goal for 2007.

The BIR was tasked to raise P516.8 billion in taxes last year but only turned in P711.6 billion.

The P54-billion shortfall by the BIR last year was largely the reason for government was forced to be aggressive in its efforts to collect uncollected taxes.

The government sold P66.6 billion worth of assets last year, more than making up for the tax collection shortfall.

Major assets sold were shares in Philippine Telecommunications Investment Corp., Philippine National Bank, and PNOC-Energy Development Corp., and the old Subic airport property.

Because the government could not always rely on privatization, the BIR was directed to implement measures to shore up tax collection.

The BIR is hard-pressed to improve tax collection this year, especially since it was given a much more higher tax collection target.

For 2008, the BIR is tasked to collect P488 billion in taxes, 14 percent higher than its P426.4-billion in goal last year.

Being the biggest revenue source among line agencies, the BIR's ability or failure to meet its tax collection target will largely influence the government's ability to meet its goal of posting a balanced budget this year.

The BIR's target for this year is to raise the 70 percent of the government's total revenue collection goal of P1.2 trillion.

The revenue target matches the P1.2-trillion in expenditure programmed for this year.

Other revenue bearer taxes collected by the BIR include import duties collected by the Bureau of Customs, proceeds from privatization, and fees and charges collected by line agencies in the delivery of services.

Redefine RP territory, DA urges Congress

By Jerry S. Barros

AGRICULTURE SECRETARY Arthur C. Yap is alarmed by the possibility that the country will lose its claim on Extended Continental Shelf areas covering the Kalayaan Island Group that are rich in fishery and mineral resources.

Yap said in a statement the other day that unless Congress passes a law to make the country's claim on these areas, it will be lost before 2009 deadline set by the United Nations, these areas would be awarded to neighboring states claiming jurisdiction over them.

"Congress has to pass a new legislation redefining the Philippine Archipelagic Baselines to establish the stretched 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone," he said.

Yap urged the Senate to assure Yap said these areas at stake have vast deposits of mineral resources like nickel and gold and species that are used as raw materials for pharmaceutical products.

The problem of setting the country's territory was among the issues raised by Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Director Malcolm I. Sarmiento during the area-wide consultation that the DA sponsored last week.

Sarmiento explained that the deadline for filing ECS claims expires on May 13 next year because the UNCLOS convention on the law of the Sea requires the affected states to submit their supporting scientific and technical data, maps and other pertinent documents within 10 years from May 13, 2009.

"The Philippines has to make a formal notice on the ECS areas like the Benham Rise and the Kalayaan Island Group because these are beyond the 200 nautical mile border set by UNCLOS," Sarmiento said.

An amendatory law is needed, added Sarmiento, because the Philippines' existing baselines, as defined by RA 3046 and amended by RA 5446, do not meet the parameters set by the UN accord.

The agriculture chief has identified the urgency for Congress to pass a pending measure authored by Cebu Rep. Antonio Cuenco seeking to redefine the Philippine Archipelagic Baselines.

House Bill No. 3215 seeks to amend RA No. 3046 and RA 5446, the laws defining the Philippines' maritime borders, which do not jibe with the provisions of the UNCLOS.

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Cooking with Carrageenans

Bento
as canvas for artwork

Food is used to recreate motifs, animé characters

SQUEEZE: Hamper and veggies are turned into cute and edible mice, piggies, whips and drumsticks.

By Fran Reigbok

KIDS HATE BAON that, by lunchtime, turns pale and soggy. Even adults do not enjoy dreary-looking food in their lunch kits.

So how do you make lunchbox meals look appetizing?

Trust the Japanese to solve the problem with their fondness for fusing art with most anything — from utensil-inspired fashion to delicate toy gadgets and phones, toy-like home implements and pop-art edibles.

Through their popular brand

BENTO artist Mari Miyazawa

"CHARMA," Hello Kitty lunchbox that doubles as owl's nest

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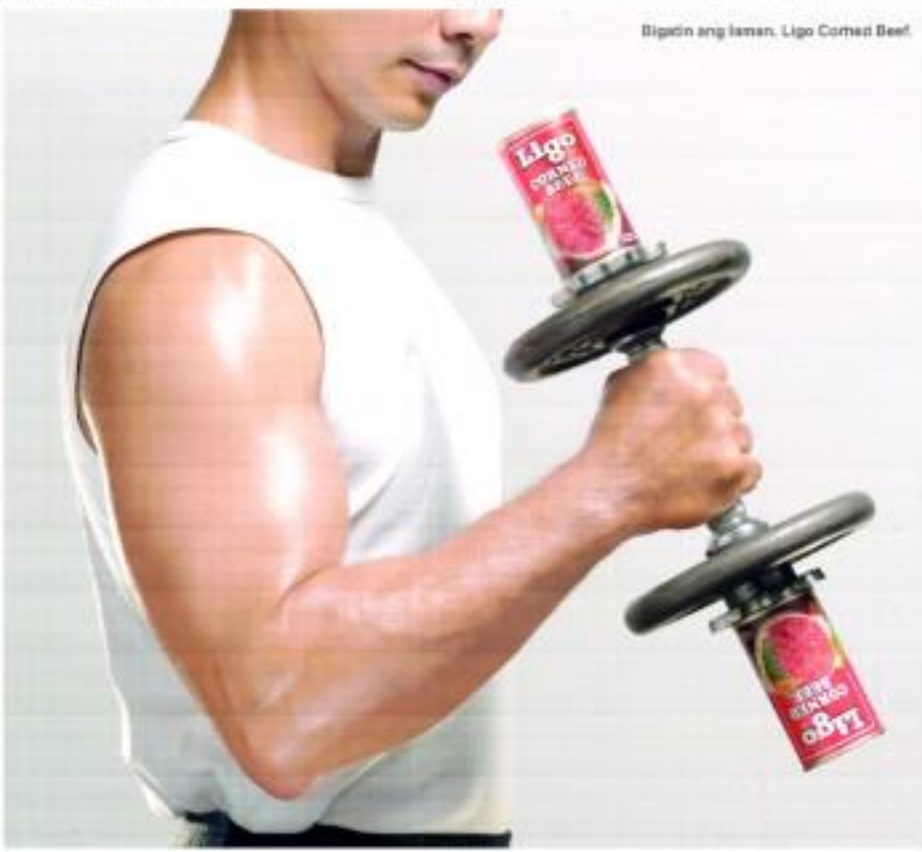

DINING OUT

Mix-and-match meals

TGIFRIDAY'S CHOOSING 2 CHEAT DAY FREE promo is available in all the chain's eight branches. Diners get to mix and match as up pet your with two of TGI's signature entrees, plus soup or starters, for P999. Starters include Fried Calamari, Jack Daniel's Wings, Mozzarella Sticks & Mac and Cheese Bites. Cajun Dinner Wings and Caesar Salad. Choices for two entrees include Wings and Chops, Pork Lumpia, Cajun Angels and Cajun Chicken Fingers. Chicken or Beef Burrito, Pesto Crostini Pasta, and Crispiest Pork Sandwich. Other rices until 09/30/11

FISH & CO. has added new items to its menu. Start with the appetizer Spinach-Bacon Dip with Garlic Toast, then try Seafood Mixt, a clear soup flavored with dashi, sliced shiitake mushrooms and spinach topped with nori strips, served with your choice of Kani Sticks or Salmon Cubes. For those who like spicy food, there is the Spicy Anchovy Pasta. Also avail-

BLACKBEARD'S Seafood Island offers Seafood Espada Combination. Also on the menu are Bacon Oysters Fritters, Baker sa Bigas a la Pobre, Calle Pinas, Jumbo Rice Fries, Pansit Bake Seafood, Pinapusok na Tilapia, Pomelo Salad, Seafood Boodle, Seafood Island Chicken, Jamaican Spicy Wings, Spicy Crispy Tadyang and Sweetest Sampler. Blackbeard's Bonello Feast is also available. Call 9135781, 8867570 or 9132894.

FISH Out of Water at 1/L, Greenbelt 5, Makati, offers Bilaonon oysters, Bulalohan ating, Visayan kaldag and other seafood dishes. Call 7251888.

sfdors the rich Beef and Pesto Pasta. Baked Seafood is served with Bulacanan rice and homemade sambal, lo kiw and ginger sauces. Rosemary Chicken is half chicken served with sautéed rice, vegetables and garlic cream sauce. The Barbecue Pork Chops with Spicy Mango Sauce is served with a spicy mango sauce.

CHOWKI PLACE Sulle is Manila's Seven Corners features "In Love with Lamb," an Australian lamb promo, March 1 - 15. Chefs from Seven Corners offer 101 creative and unique Japanese, Chinese, Mediterranean and Middle Eastern dishes using lamb. The promo menu has 4 different cuts of lamb: from loin, shoulder, legs, racks, rumps, ribs as well as a variety of exciting sauces. Call 8324222.

SUSHI-TEI offers meatless and healthy dishes this June. The Salmon Teriyaki is freshly cooked salmon fillet, with a drizzle of teriyaki sauce (P185). Add P58 and you get miso soup plus rice. Prices are inclusive of value-added tax but no service charge. Meanwhile, Sushi-Tei Whatgata Mabang now has delivery service. Whatgata Mabang is at Filinvest Corporate City's Alabang. Whitemarsh. Call 8585577 loc 2751 e-mail swatgata@sttei

SHAKEY has over 100 vegetarian and non-meat dishes using roots, cereals, pulses, fancy-grass leaves, wheat, mushrooms, spinach, and seafood and fish dishes. They include pizzas or toppings, sandwiches, pastas, soups, salads, sauces, tomatoes and flavored spices, aurna, creamy sauce and spices and dal, black lentil soup. Swagat at KCC Building, 119 Kalo St.,

Bento as canvas for artwork

BENTO should be a complete meal.

From page A1

lunch-called bento, the Japanese have used food as a medium for recreating motifs, scenes, anime characters, J-pop stars and other famous personalities in small containers.

Creating lunchbox art may seem expensive, tedious and time-consuming, but bento artist Mari Miyamura insists it can be done if you put your heart into it.

"I didn't need expensive ingredients or a culinary degree (to make bento art)," said Miyamura, speaking through an interpreter. She was recently in Manila as special guest and judge in the first Nestlé Bento Competition at Shangri-La Plaza Mall, one of several events during the two-week Sibonga Fiesta sponsored by the Japan Foundation.

A former computer graphics illustrator, Miyamura channeled her creativity into bento art in 2003, a year after she became a full-time housewife.

She has also conducted countless demonstrations, published six books and hosted a website (www.e-obento.com) that features food journals along with photos of her work.

In the demonstration segments at the event, Miyamura chef these things to consider in preparing bento: It should be handy; it should taste good even when cold, and it must be a complete meal of meat, vegetables plus pickled treats.

Her bento tools (a pair of tweezers, a cutter knife, small scrapbook paperbacks) are not scaring implements but the unconventional she use just about any item in the kitchen to slice, shape or sculpt ingredients.

A sculpted cheese online transformed sausage into flowers. Paper punchers created eyes in mustard sprigs, while the tip of a heart-shaped cutter fashioned ham ears for three cute rascals.

WORD-famous Bento Competition

"I tend to believe one had to be a good cook to make bento but it later dawned on me that something as simple as putting a piece of (sculpted) cheese can make a lunchbox cute," Miyamura said.

The artist believes homemade bento is not just food but a representation of something warm and unique. She changes the expression on the faces of characters and gives each creation a title as a way of putting a message into the lunchbox.

"I go into bento-making to save money," said Miyamura. "Now if you become a mom to express how I feel he done I make bento for and let them to know how I feel about them."

LUNCHBOX art need not be expensive. Create design using ingredients of the need.

WINTER scene in a box

CHANGE the facial expressions and ear size to achieve the three "similar" creations on yesterday's bento.

THE CONSUME
Lifestyle & Relatio

Making peop for using plast

THE DAYS WHEN people go shopping and count on supermarkets or grocery stores to provide the bags for their purchases may be numbered.

In Melbourne, the capital of the Australian state of Victoria, shoppers carried reusable bags or, if they forgot, bought them from the store. It was very easy to find a store that would still provide plastic bags for purchases.

Those who were hoping a lot of stuff transported their purchases in bags with wheels that they could conveniently push or pull to their cars or their homes—if they lived within walking distance of the store.

I do not know if there are statistics or laws requiring the stores to take the initiative but, coincidence or not, it seems that there is a lot of awareness among Australians, not just those living in Melbourne but other areas, too, of the need to practice the 3Rs—reduce, reuse and recycle—to clean, if not completely avoid, global warming, the steady rise in earth's average temperature that is causing average changes in the weather and melting the polar ice caps.

Greening the consumer

Consumers, by the choices they make, have a significant contribution to make in protecting the environment. It seems that for many countries, a decrease in the use of plastic bags is an important way they can take.

Thus, in 2002, Ireland imposed a tax on plastic bags, according to The New York Times.

Elizabeth Rosenthal, in a report from Dublin published in a recent issue of the NYT, said "customers who want them [plastic bags] must now pay 22 cents per bag at the register."

The effect was instant and dramatic, Rosenthal said. Within weeks, plastic bag use dropped 94 percent. Within a year, nearly everyone had bought reusable cloth bags, keeping them in offices and in the backs of cars. Plastic bags were not outlawed, but carrying

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March 7, 14, 28, April 4,11, and 18; 8:30pm; Garden Court
• Three Samsung mobile phones (E590, F630 or F300) per draw
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COUNTRY COOKING
Micky Fenix

BISCUIT chosen at Binondo Mass

DE CAÑA straight from the oven

Stops for 'pasalubong'

THE FIRST TIME I WAS MADE to leave some pasalubong at the airport was in Bohol. They were pili artchies (and harvested fresh from the site at the resort), where I stayed for three blissful days, and loaded without the shells.

I was sure the inspector was eyeing the fresh, slippery flesh of the two varieties there, the runny square and the flimsy bottles, and grateful I wouldn't bring them with me.

My only consolation at being deprived of my treasured sea urchins was being given cake (in Leyte by a cousin's cousin who I chanced upon at the waiting lounge. She proudly proclaimed it was made from the home-cooked of purple yam inside country, the blessings, that is Bohol's pride.

I have since learned my lesson. Now I make sure that I wonder such are food into plastic containers with the covers screwed tight and sealed with masking or packing tape.

That is how I pack the salted eel (small) oysters like sisi-lihan) bought from the Tacloban market whenever we go home to Leyte. More important, my air companions have to be checked in never hand-carried.

Big symbolism considers with non-liquid ice packs have made it possible to bring fresh seafood from the provinces to Manila.

I remember the time not too long ago when we had to fly the fish and season the crabs and shrimps just to be able to bring these home in the freshest state possible.

Pasalubong are gifts you give to family and friends when you return from a trip for work or vacation. Sometimes you are asked for specific things (listing). Those who do are warned that they will get them while on long or I don't have to look for it. But sometimes they end up as one for of most fun.

Must-bring

With every trip to Leyte, I have to bring home certain products because those are reminded by certain people. Apart from the oil and seafood, I have to get certain specialties from certain towns. Imagel of Dagami, pastillas and bibi of Carigara, and the cassava and delicacy of Barugo.

Imagel is roasted cashew (where grind (and) packed in halved coconut shell with a mixture of cooked sugar and coconut milk with some peanuts on the bottom.

Carigara's specialties in pastillas de leche but its version is the form kind. The dish is pulled once mixed in with peanuts.

Barugo and its sotta are biscuits, both like butter cookies. The sweeter variety is shaped like a chicken leg and the salted-da sotta is shaped like a boat.

In Cebu, getting favorites specialties is also easier with Dercy's Pasalubong Shop in the city. If you do not have time to go from place to place, this one-stop shop has almost all the items you may want. The famous ones every bakery (tinutuchi de Cebu, Diamond Rose, Rio) are there, as well as the chest-nut cookies of Mommy House.

Hope-hope, pounded rice that is the specialty of Davao, goes nicely as I've found out.

You cannot get Ruth's delicacies (fish paste) there, Zam, and other Bais varieties, from other parts of the country. But if you do get pasalubong from the market, you will have to pack it really well so the smell does not escape.

It is best to wrap smelly items like Cebu pusiswas and dried fish in plastic, then in newspaper, then in plastic again.

Release-deliveries

Of course, we just had to bring home fresh Davao Scare cassicada, salted, pulled and unpeeled with garlic. The bigger, deep-fried whole fish of pork, is also a must although you may be confused if the customs and is shocked-on. And if you want garlic's suggestion, don't be shy when you get it.

Also, the woven cotton of the Davao, can either be bought at the weaving houses or the market. The designs and the colors are much better now. Be careful, however, not to buy much more than you need.

The other items we wanted to bring home were fruit, the local wine, and the dark Davao cigars, both made from sugarcane juice. But these are not allowed on the plane. If you can have someone send you some by bus, then grandkids it.

Years ago, whenever I went to Malolos, Bulacan, the pit stop before heading back home was always the Villegas bakery just past the Malolos Church. It had the usual bakery biscuits like biscochos. But it was famous for its ensaymada, a rich bread with slices of ham. The top was edged with butter then sprinkled with grated cheese.

So a very I was lucky to have been in the place and since Villegas exasperated because the bakery is no longer there and the two women who owned the place passed away taking their ensaymada recipe, including their secret starter yeast, with them.

Today, the pasalubong emporium is Eastwood. This is where I get triple, two cakes sandwiching a creamy mixture, the chocolate and even the ensaymada. In Metro Manila, Eastwood produces are available in some malls so there is no need to go all the way to Malolos just for those treats.

E-mail the author at *pinoyfood@yahoo.com*

COOKING CLASSES

Gambas, coffee and foie gras

CHEF REGGIE ASPIRAS IS CONDUCTING THE FOLLOWING cooking classes:

Feb. 29—Kiddies (all-ages). Gambas in Extra Virgin Olive Oil; Gambas in Red Egg Sauce with Coriander Crunch and Chopped Century Eggs; Yummy Gambas/Masala Bolitas style, in hot chili-coriander oil, mosco-banana curry; Gambas Stir-fry with Candied Cashews, in Wheels, Garlic & Cilantro Oil, atsu, Bonzo—4 authentic Gambas a style

March 1—(all-ages). The Ultimate Coffee Class: Coffee Decoctions to be taught by Lorel Sandra Bona Rosario—known to roommate, barista, coffee-shop owners or service-coffee aficionados; Brewing the Perfect Cup, Iced and Cold Coffee Concoctions (Espresso, Cappuccino, Latte, Frappuccino, Au lait, Flavored Coffees—over 10 different hot and cold coffee concoctions; ice coffee cake, cookie and bar recipes to complement the perfect brew (special class)

March 3—My Twisted Marinate (all ages). Pandan Fried Scopa with Kaffir Mango Jam; Asian Pesto Arrozaia with Tempura of Soft Shell Crab; Mee Krob (delicious Thai crispy noodles); Risotto al Diamante with Tayo Rakes and Crispy Chorizo; Indonesian-style Ikan-Bale—Ice Kachang with Homemade Green Tea Ice Cream

March 5—Foie Gras (all-ages). Pan-seared with Grapes, Blueberries, Honey Balsamic Demi Reduction; Whole Baked with Mixed Fruit Compote, condiments and toast; Truffle Mushroom Chicken with Foie Gras and Foie Pasta; Seared Scallops with Foie Butter and Garlic Mushroom Pasta; Foie-topped Grilled Steak with Mushrooms; Foie French Toast with Fruit Compote.

Call 6080696, 3013888 or 0920-4888810.

Cooking for the graduates

Let Maya Kitchen help you honor the new graduates in the family with its cooking program that will equip you to whip up a marvelous grad celebration.

March 1, 9 a.m.—**Lechon Belly**. Learn to create fabulous party foods such as Buffalo Wings (a la Bellacio); Deep Fried Calamares with Red Aioli; Tuba Stew; Baked Nachos with Salsa Cheese Sauce; Crab Gratin; Creamy Mushroom Brochette; and Smoked Chicken Quesadilla.

March 6-7, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.—**Fundamentals of Bakery Production**: Come and share an oven with Maya's talented team of bakers. Topics include basic and commercial baking techniques applicable to baking applications on the use of various ready mixes, yeast breads, quick breads, pies, cookies and cakes. Workshop on actual bakery practice for Commercial Scale Productions is also included. Attendees get a free baking cookbook.

March 8, 2 p.m.—**Pasta Fusion**. Take the plain pasta for granted your wildest dreams. Light up and prepare Pasta Alle Vongole; Alle Vongole; Roasted Pepper and Crabmeat Homemade Cocktail Tomatoes Pasta; Carbonara in Oriental Pesto; Alfredo and Tapa Pasta as a bonus.

March 11-14, 9 a.m.-2 p.m.—**Basic Culinary**. Take your cooking skills up a notch. This hands-on class focuses on proper hygiene, sanitation and safety; nutrition and nutritional cooking; proper mis-en-place of knife-cuts, stocks, soups, sauces, marinades; use of herbs and spices combinations; proper purchasing, storage techniques of dispersing and boning poultry, filleting fish and meat fabrication. Actual preparation of dishes from appetizer all the way to dessert, including garnishing for plate presentations, is also included.

Call The Maya Kitchen (Tuesdays-Saturdays) at the BIC Liberty Building, A. Arnaiz Ave. (formerly Pasay Rd.), Makati. Call 8921185 or 8923011 local 108. E-mail themayakitchen@libertygroup.com.ph.

Meanwhile, young bakers got fancy with Maya's master class during the Maya Schools' tour covering grade school and high-school levels at Poveda, St. Scholastica's and Assumption. The young cooks had fun while creating an exciting and easy-to-follow recipes like "Baby Mocha Pancake" and "The Emperor's Pancake." The school tour was designed to teach children creative cooking and baking skills, as the same time imparting creative ways of pleasing fabulous.

Catered To Your Business

"We are in the Internet age and we acknowledge that the increased advantages that this technology can bring in to the business. This is why we decided to register with eyp."

Take a bite of a delicious mix of seafood wrapped in crispy phyllo pastry with lemon cream sauce, succulent fish fillet with grilled spinach, or a slice of heavenly thin cheese pizza with savory mushrooms. These are just some of the mouth-watering dishes that have established Barbara's, a fine food and catering business.

Established in 1972 as Admiral Manila Restaurant, it operated a modest cafe-restaurant before opening more employees' cafeterias in different companies. After a decade, Admiral Manila's president and general manager, Barbara Gordon de los Reyes co-founded and organized the Makati Skyline Restaurant in 1984. Through the company divested from Makati Skyline, it continued its catering and canteen management operations under the new company name, Barbara's Food and Catering Services, Inc.

With the new name came new and exciting times for the catering company. They opened more suitable collaterals and began to manage banquet operations for many big-name establishments. Barbara's kept pleasing the taste buds of as many people it was so outside the company kept requesting. It opened the Barbara's Restaurant Cafe and Sala-Filipino Ballroom, and began managing the 2,000 square meter garden venue of Star Villa Inc., both in Intramuros, Manila, the name Barbara's has also become a part of many weddings, birthdays and other celebrations.

"Every client who comes to Barbara's is given our personal attention because we understand that no matter how small the occasion is to them the budget, the function is a special celebration to the client's life," says de los Reyes. This kind of service, not to mention Barbara's delicious menu, has kept the company its were kind of popularity. "By God's wonderful grace, our business has grown by the word of clients who were satisfied by the good food and service that we have extended to them."

Word-of-mouth has indeed played a big part in establishing Barbara's in the food service industry. However, de los Reyes recognizes that the company she has successfully built for several decades is now moving in an age where businesses need to keep up with the fast pace of technology.

Topping Philippine electronic directory listing searches in popular search engines, yellow pages (www.eyp.ph) is the most widely used online business listing in the country. The accounts for more interaction with prospective clients. In a six-month period, 80,000 of the registered businesses registered were contacted (mostly online through eyp (this didn't include companies who were contacted by phone or fax).

Barbara's, which is registered under eyp's Business Showcase, receives between 2,000 to 5,000 page-views in its category every month. Through the eyp website, potential clients can easily find Barbara's contact details to make inquiries about their menu and catering services. The Business Showcase also provides Barbara's with its own webpage that is immediately searchable from the eyp homepage. Aside from this, other eyp special packages are Premium Listing, which puts the client company at the top of the list for its category; and Banner Ads, which promotes the company's visibility even on crowded pages of eyp's site. These three packages make the registered business, like Barbara's, easily accessible to eyp's 150,000 visitors (1.5 million page views) every month.

De los Reyes is convinced that their choice to register in eyp will help Barbara's attract more customers—while they keep on serving more of those delicious dishes. "This move will only bring the best results."

Connect with your customers now!
Sign-up at
www.growyourbusiness.ph

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LIFESTYLE

More about Nigella

KITCHEN RESCUE
Reggie Aspiras

FROM DOMESTIC GODDESS Nigella Lawson, here are more answers to your e-mailed questions.

Red tips of cookware? Cast-iron, stainless, etc.? Why?

Well, I am very amenable to all types in a sense because I think if you get used to your own things, you become familiar with them. But I also make my own stock-wise, so I try to make stuff that I know I will like.

I think I like a certain degree of warmth, but I don't like it in far too heavy. And it's quite difficult to get that balance. A lot of the cast-iron stuff is fantastic, but I don't have the strength to lift it all the time.

Nigella's favorites

Favorite taste? Sweet, salty, spicy or bitter?

Salty and spicy. I have a savory tooth, not a sweet tooth.

Favorite ingredient? How is this ingredient applied?

That's so difficult. There are so many ingredients in the world, how can I ever just pick one? But I would find it very, very difficult to cook without lemons.

Favorite cooking tip/trick?

My favorite tip or trick is I think most is usually always here—I mean red meat, not pork or chicken—if you cook it at a high temperature for a short time and then wrap it twice in foil and let it sit somewhere so that it carries on cooking in its own heat. Otherwise, I think it's very easy to make meat tough. It takes practice.

For example, if I'm cooking steak for supper, I will often only [cook] each side for[ ] two minutes and then I will just wrap it in foil and sit it somewhere on wood, tin or stone or anything cold in the kitchen, for about 10 minutes before eating it. I find it also doesn't shrink its size so much. So it's both economical and delicious.

Favorite cooking method? Dry, bake?

Well, that depends on how much time I have. When I have time but tired, I prefer roasting in a hot oven. And when I don't have much time, I prefer to put it on the griddle in a pan because it takes less time, [of course]. I have to[o] there to do it.

Favorite cheese?

My favorite indulgence is bleu cheese.

Favorite chocolate?

My favorite chocolate? I think as long as it's really good, I don't mind. There are moods when I must have dark chocolate, and at other times milk chocolate. But there is a limit—I don't know if you're aware of it—it's salted Snapes Chocolate

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BY ELIZABETH CHONGUILO

KIKO MACHINE

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DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Dugout cooler
6 Part of a bottle cap
10 Algonquian language
14 Serenity
19 Pro's opposite
20 Persistence virus
21 Start of a quip
24 Corn husklike
25 Milk-producing
26 Lawmaker
27 Heavenly place
28 City in GA
29 Car behind
30 Last song
31 Cut with an axe
32 Bone
33 Part 2 of quip
36 Like shakedowns
37 Opposite of TV
41 Ability
42 Move gracefully
43 Hammer
44 Pen
45 Part 3 of quip
46 Ambrose movie
47 Hardware item
51 Cockroach relative
52 Mountain
54 Group holding meeting
55 Part of quip
60 Sick of Jackie?
61 Hall of quotes
62 Hole-and-fly sweepers
63 Shell mark
64 Lukewarm
65 Laundry problem
66 Minister of Medina
67 Lead, as songs
68 Elton second company

DOWN
1 Alone
2 Hornlike fabric shield
3 Kid "bo"
4 Like dance
5 Line of work
6 Dance material
7 Logic
8 Reading specialists
9 Women impersonators
10 Dishwasher part
11 Rinse to the bath of color
12 Free swimmer
13 Black-and-white bird
21 Lithuanian monetary master
24 TV's "Mr. T of A Team"
25 Drive a light or easy car
28 Bomb low over
29 "Hey, King and Queen!"
31 Intelligence
32 Risky course
33 Rapper Dr. Dre's specialty
37 Bank deposit
38 Chocolate source
39 Lots of corn grains
40 Little piggy
45 Payments for someone
47 Chill
48 Commander after a cruise call
49 Mongolian tourist
50 Adam's grandson
53 Tournament
54 Tournament
57 Lotto org.

By Allan P. Blackmore
Huntington Beach, CA

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCES DRAKE

FOR BORN TODAY You have a wonderful gift for the finer and rare arts, especially sculpture and painting. You emphasize color and form by underlying it, and, in fact, you love anything rhythmic. You're not afraid to work hard and feel that the effort is the most rewarding aspect. While hard to handle as a child and sometimes difficult as an adult, you have a lot of good qualities. Famous people born on this day: Barbara Eden, hockey player Mario Lemieux, race driver John Fitch, actor John Forsythe.

ARIES (March 21 to April 20) Be diplomatic and tactful. Mistakes could cause problems. Be cautious about romantic involvements. Don't be overly critical of loved ones.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20) You might be disappointed about something. Don't overdo. Something could be fulfilling. Be considerate of others' feelings. Something you thought would be fulfilling may be unsatisfactory.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20) Communication with others is important, and close friends are your best partners. Be careful about what you say. Don't be overly critical of loved ones. Be cautious about romantic involvements.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22) Co-workers are important. Be careful with your health. Be cautious about romantic involvements. Don't be overly critical of loved ones.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22) Be careful with your health. Be cautious about romantic involvements. Don't be overly critical of loved ones. Be careful with your health. Be cautious about romantic involvements.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22) Avoid confrontations with others. Be careful with your health. Be cautious about romantic involvements. Don't be overly critical of loved ones.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22) Don't worry about things that are out of your control. Be careful with your health. Be cautious about romantic involvements. Don't be overly critical of loved ones.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21) Don't worry about things that are out of your control. Be careful with your health. Be cautious about romantic involvements. Don't be overly critical of loved ones.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21) Don't feel unloved or lonely. Don't be overly critical of loved ones. Be careful with your health. Be cautious about romantic involvements.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19) Don't feel unloved or lonely. Don't be overly critical of loved ones. Be careful with your health. Be cautious about romantic involvements.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18) Be careful with your health. Be cautious about romantic involvements. Don't be overly critical of loved ones.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20) You're in a good time for romance with partners, lovers and friends. Be careful with your health. Be cautious about romantic involvements.

CONCEPTS SUDOKU

Concepts Sudoku

By Dave Green

5							1	
			7		2			9
					5	8		
	7			1		4	6	
			4		8			
	2	3		6			5	
		7	2					
1			3		6			
	4							7

Difficulty Level ★★★

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HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and programs at www.sudoku.com or www.sudoku.com.cn

Answer to previous puzzle

7	2	1	4	9	3	8	6	5
9	3	8	7	2	5	1	9	4
4	5	6	8	6	1	2	7	3
1	8	7	5	6	4	3	2	9
2	4	3	6	1	9	8	5	7
5	6	9	2	3	7	4	1	8
3	5	2	1	7	8	9	4	6
8	1	4	3	5	6	7	8	2
6	7	5	9	4	2	5	3	1

Difficulty level ★★★

Open season for flavorful yet healthy food

THE SUCCESSFUL "KENNY'S Open Sit" staged recently by Kenny Rogers Roasters gave the public the chance to experience the "good life," meaning deliciously healthy food, a fit body, camaraderie among family and friends in a fun filled and highly active environment.

Throughout the event at the Rockwell Tent, there was something for everyone to enjoy, including Fitness Fiesta's heart-pumping exercise classes. Kids romped off to the Riddle Center to enjoy the activities by Gymboree and Little Tikes. Sports buffs shopped for cool outdoor gear at special prices courtesy of Nike Stadium and Adidas. People queued at the Nutrition Desk to have one-on-one consultations with dietitians and nutritionists.

Meanwhile, teenagers got to unleash their inner Jordan by shooting hoops at an awesome Coke Light's basketball court set while young fitness buffs were treated to a demonstration and an instructional session on capoeira.

There were raffles throughout the day with exciting prizes, such as all-expense-paid trips to Bohol, Cebu and Boracay.

Kenny Rogers Roasters offered food feed freshly grilled and roasted entrée and served at the sandwich, side dish, salad, muffins and dessert, and smoothies bars.

GRILLED Pizzetta

GRILLED Beef Mixed

Kenny also presented its version of healthy gourmet dishes that will soon be part of the menu like steaks, paninis, salmon and pork chops that were all grilled and highly seasoned for healthy flavor.

"We want to disprove the common notion that healthy dishes taste bland," explained Kenny Rogers Center, group marketing director of Rustan's Hyde.

Kenny's makeover and image model, Miss Helen, played host together with Jet "Amazing Race Asia 2" Buddy Rocelyn Belmonte, and the equally fit and stunning Amanda Griffin.

Other guest celebrities included Million Maribod, MTV VJ Kat Alano, Ellen Sutherland stars Doug Kramer, LA Tenorio, Lizzy Poinsetta and JC Intal. Former PBB housemates Will Devaughn, Kim Kimiral and Denise Simmons, among others.

PAIN DE MINUILLE's store visitors are likewise entertained as they witness how the baker moves in front of the old-style pugon.

Baking bread the Old World way

THE BAKERY CHAIN "PAIN" has revived the traditional way of baking pan de sal has also brought back An Old Manila ambiance to its new storefronts.

Pan de Manila's new outlets in Robinsons Malls and this Lucia Tan, Grand Mall highlight the classic design commonly found in typical colonial houses.

Stained glass is affixed on the facade of the store. Wrought iron and grill work are likewise used to add character to the store shelves that carry Pan de Manila's favorite breads and baked treats. The walls resemble a fancy pattern of adjacent houses. A wooden table is appropriately used on top of the shelves, while wall lamps at the counter mimic the lighting used in olden times. Bird birds in the Earliest interior allusions to traditional Filipino houses.

But the Manila's store visitors are likewise entertained as they witness how the baker moves in front of the old-style pugon (oven made of Binh adobe bricks). He uses a pala or a wooden stick to put in and pull out piping-hot breads on rises from the brick oven. Adjacent, the dough is carefully placed on the *bilao*—the wooden round stylized with a wrought iron base.

But de Manila's newest branches are located in Robinsons Nova Market, Shoppesat Greenbelt 5, Ayala Center, Cebu, Greenhills Shoppesat, Eyeball pandesuerte in Robinsons or call 9186666.

More about Nigella

Continued from D1

and I get it from Chicago and that chocolate bar is just incredible.

And there is a particular bar called Barcelona Bar and it is good quality milk chocolate with salt and almonds. I love the sweet with the salt and the nuts together. That is my dream chocolate bar.

Favorite dessert?

My favorite dessert is anything with chestnut puree in it.

Favorite wine?

My favorite wine is Rioja, Riserdo, red wine from Tuscany.

Favorite champagne?

My favorite champagne is Taittinger.

Nigella's advice

What will you advise those wanting a career like yours?

Too much. I don't know because I never planned my career. It happened by accident. I think don't have plans. Just try and do what you like. It must be very hard to get into [this] field because so many people want to do this job, but you cannot let that put you off. Someone has to be given the chance to do it. So why can't that be you?

Being what you are today, how would you advise the interviewer? What is the legacy you want to leave behind in the world of food?

I don't know. I just would like to feel that I encouraged people to cook. I don't mind if they don't follow my recipes. I want to encourage people to understand that everyone can go into the kitchen and cook. So I suppose I want to give confidence to people. I'm happy.

If you were a dish, what would you be?

Oh it's so difficult, that's very, very hard. I'm not a personality self-conscious person. I think I might be an ice cream cake.

Nigella gifts us with a recipe from her book "Nigella Express."

Chicken Schnitzel with Bacon and White Wine

1 tsp garlic oil

4 chicken escalopes (approximately 125 g each)

6 rashers streaky bacon

150 ml white wine

Put the oil in a frying pan and add the bacon.

Fry till the bacon is crisp and the pan is full of bacon juices. Remove the bacon to a piece of foil, scrap it and set it aside for a moment.

Fry the chicken for about two minutes a side, until there is no pinkness when you cut into a piece. Make sure the pan's hot so that the escalopes catch a little, turning beautifully brown.

Remove the chicken to a serving plate and quickly scramble the bacon you've set aside into the pan. Then pour in the wine, letting everything bubble up and, finally, pour over the chicken pieces.

Serves four.

Catch Nigella and her delicious recipes on "Nigella Express," premiering Friday, March 7, 8:30 p.m., on Discovery Travel & Living.

E-mail the author at *rao@inquirer.com.ph*

SONY
BRAVIA
COLOR. By Bravia
1080
Visit our website at www.sony.com.ph

PRAWNS Cocktail with gilthead bream and baby greens

MUSTARD Baked Oysters Rockefeller

SEARED Foie Gras

Gourmet comfort food

By Irene C. Perez

WHETHER YOU have had a long day or want to reward yourself for a job well done, a nice meal is always in order. And what better way to do so than to celebrate than savoring a delectable, succulent steak?

So sizzle you carnivore and indulge at 22 Prime, where gourmet comfort food is served daily.

The name to associate classic with good food. No trends, just basic, and food of good quality," said Arnaldo Monteverde, HRA Partners president.

Located at the Serendipity Lounge of Discovery Suites in Ortigas, the restaurant on the 22nd floor (hence, 22 Prime) has a sophisticated but warm ambience. Offering a cheerful view of the city's skyline, it has elegant touches lit by just the right amount of sunshine on the daytime.

Proudly prime

Drinking itself in serving only prime level 22 Prime serves high-grade steak ideal for grilling because of the right amount of marbling for searing through the muscles).

Prime is hard to find even in the United States. Out of 100 cows, only one is considered prime. So between choice and prime, prime is definitely more special," said Discovery Suites general manager Bobby Hontiveros.

Steak lovers can choose from Rib Eye, Filet Mignon, Filet Mignon Petite (a smaller serving), New York Striploin Steak and House Burger (great for kids).

Corporate chef David Nicole de Ayala said the juicy Grilled Wagyu Beef Medallions were the Prime favorite.

"Wagyus have this because it's tender and they like to serve them as medallions so it is easier to eat them."

Steaks are served with two sauces from this selection: the popular Three Peppercorn, Beer Mushrooms, Teriyaki Barbecue, Three Mustard Cream, Horseradish Cream and Tarragon Bernaise.

Those who find beef too heavy can have the grilled Australian Veal Chops or Rosas Pork Chops. Chicken Lovers in Montreal, and try the Lamb Baby Back Ribs, finished specialties include Norwegian Salmon and Jumbo Prawns.

On the side

Of course, a good steak usually requires sides. Sizzle or Pan-fried Foie or a serving of Ginger Filet counters the steak's richness.

Regular potato salads, an Hand-cut French Fries, Onion Rings, Garlic Roasted Potatoes. There are also Roasted Mushrooms, Spinach Gratin, Grilled Asparagus and Zucchini and Braised Baby Carrots for those who like vegetables.

French and California vintage wines are available to complete the meal.

Pork-style Apple and the many dessert items queries. While vegetables were served locally, the meats and salmon were all imported. "I have a close relationship with the suppliers," he said.

Other items you should try at 22 Prime are the extreme Baked Oysters Rockefeller, Melt-in-the-mouth Duck confit topped with cocoa spinach, and Prawns Cocktail served with grilled lemon, baby greens and homemade cocktail sauce.

Try the Savory Soup samplers offering small servings of Asian Lobster Bisque (with real cream), French Onion Soup (soupy and full of texture), and Soup du Jour (the chef's special of the day).

Those who do not mind extra calories will enjoy Chef Rick's Cheese Bread (sun-dried tomato bread with cheese toppings and baby greens) and Seared Foie Gras (duck liver with apple rosemary puree and pinot-barolo-cognac sauce).

The Salad list offers the freshest greens for those who like vegetables.

PINOY Lomito a Grilled Wagyu Beef Medallions

SAVORY Soup Samplers of Asian Lobster Bisque, French Onion and Soup du Jour

HEAVY, tender and flavorful Filet Mignon

Serious sugar high

Cap off a steak meal with a yummy dessert. Choices include fresh and fruit cake selection was especially popular with the women.

Dessert staples include the Chocolate Marquise (soft chocolate mousse with vanilla English cream and pistachio bits), Apple Tart Tatin (offering a twist on the classic apple pie), Chocolate & Peanut Butter Cake (sunny sweetness), Strawberry Crème Caramel Crumble (caramel buttered on caramel sauce), and Cappuccino Crème Brûlée (for a serious sugar high).

Coffee junkies, meanwhile, can choose from Espresso, Cappuccino, Macchiato, Café Latte, Cappuccino Freddo, Mocha Latte and Espresso Freddo—all using Bo Bi Italian coffee.

The 60-seater restaurant is usually packed during dinner-time with families and couples, and barkada who go for cocktails with Rosko names like The Rose, 9° Vodka and The Sweet Spot.

Discovery Suites' 22 Prime is open Monday-Sunday for lunch (12 noon-2:30 p.m.) and dinner (6 p.m.-10 p.m.). Call 9659222 loc. 3702 or 3722.

Sip-and-shop café

UNIQUE ceramicware, such as the Clemens Teapot, can only be found in TCP.

TABLELEG for a sweet sip-it: Chevron Chocolate Cup

TCP Coffee Kids. Experience authentic and world-class Philippine coffee only in Travel Cafe Philippines.

THE FIRST DESTINATION-themed lifestyle café in the country that recently opened in Greenbelt 5, is Malaysia's answer to the Department of Tourism in effort to experience the Philippines in a country while sipping coffee.

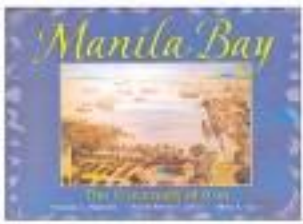
Travel Cafe Philippines (TCP) exposes people to taste the flavorful coffees of the Philippines and encourages diners to avail of the services of its reliable Travel Concierge for local travel information and arrangements.

A visit to TCP is like swinging by an all-Filipino store where you can shop for (mostly of local) items, except that there are no chains in TCP.

In support of Fair Trade, Travel Cafe Philippines sources their coffee beans roasted, ground, served and sold exclusively from Philippine coffee farmers who are given the best price for their produce.

Available are Philippine Organic Coffee (sifadit in pasalo) in 250 grams, such as Mantad (Arabica), Mount Matutum (Arabica), Cordillera Mountain (Arabica), and Premium Barako Blend (Liberica-Arabica).

TCP also serves Philippine coffee in drip form: Cordillera Mountain Coffee in an easy open-drip bottle is available in 40-gram boxes (5 sachets of 8 grams per box) or in gift packs of



640-grams boxes (P320 per 40-gram box; P 1,120 per gift pack of 6).

The café houses a Travel Library where one can read and buy limited-edition Philippine coffee-table books and reference materials on the country from The Filipino Bookstore and the Philippine Department of Tourism, authored by famed and highly respected Filipino writers. These books highlight the country's colorful heritage.

TCP also offers a range of accessories by Philippine ceramic artist Lucille Abueva-Serrano and The Homeware Series Inc., a German-Filipino venture based in Cagayan de Oro. Each unique handmade ceramic piece is matt-coated according to TCP's design philosophy and is lead-free and safe to use in oven, microwave-oven and dishwasher.

TCP's Music Menu features an exclusive musical selection from renowned Filipino artists, such as Bayo Gershwin, Louie Ocampo, Jonjo Carrasco, Jose Sabenga-no Ebling Society, Richard Trias, Bo Razon, among others.

SWEET TASTING coffee variants. TCP offers different local coffee in-take, such as Cordillera Mountain, Premium Barako Blend and Mount Matutum Coffee.

TCP is at L-L, Greenbelt 5, Ayala Center, Makati City. It will soon open in SM Mall of Asia and will have franchisees in New Delhi, Seoul, Shanghai, Beijing, Dubai, Singapore and Los Angeles. Call the TCP Project Secretariat at +632 8204113 or e-mail travelcafephilippines@gmail.com.

EXPERIENCE Filipino scenic greats with the TCP Music Menu, a compilation of songs from various acclaimed local artists.

ENTERTAINMENT

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INSIDE

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- **Robin Padilla back to hammy acting style** Viewfinder /E4

When Charlene met Mikee

CHARLENE Gonzales, L, and Mikee Cojuangco: First "in-depth" exchange.

Both sides now—one's husband was once linked to the other

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

BEFORE INTRIGUE-energizer could pounce on it, TV host Charlene Gonzales reluctantly agreed: "I'm very excited to interview Mikee."

Charlene means superstar-boxer Mikee Cojuangco who, with more Tingting Cojuangcos, recently caged an episode of Charlene's now QTV show "Personality Filipinas."

Pop culture buffs would widely remember that Mikee was famously paired with Charlene's husband Iga Makiadi sometimes. On the other hand, Mikee's husband, Boots Anson-Roa, was romantically linked to Charlene.

Looks like a romantic square dance, but Charlene swiftly pointed out, "There was never any sentiment between Mikee and myself. We used to bump into each other occasionally and we always made small talk. But has always struck me as a nice person."

Mikee's grooming, Charlene revealed, was a happy occasion for their first "in-depth" exchange. The taping was held in Mikee's Bang Bang bar last week.

Sincere interest

"Charlene was touched that Mikee had warmly welcomed her," program manager Mely Esguerra related. "They openly talked about their husbands and were so chatty and comfy with each other."

Gigi Santiago Lara, assistant vice president for Alternative Productions, said Charlene had the gift of drawing out interesting conversations from the show's guests. "She makes them feel at ease."

Charlene explained, "I guess it's because when I ask a question, I'm sincerely interested in the answer." It led, she added, she goes the extra mile, researching about the guests. "For example, I learned so much about Ms Tingting, she's not just an icon of beauty; she also leads a multi-faceted life, like Mikee."

Shida recalled that, during the interview, Mikee discussed her Olympian dreams, as well as her joys and fears for her family.

Charlene said that another thing she shares with Mikee is, they both look up to their respective moms as their idea of "Proud Pinays."

The Tingting-Mikee episode airs on March 7.

Dream interview

Charlene makes her debut on "Personality" tomorrow with another of her "dream" interviews—Sen. Vic and Jinggoy and their respective partners Helen Gamboa, Precy Ejercito and Ellen Ejercito-Estrada.

"It's about the women behind these three successful men," Charlene said. "I never had the chance to interview them before because we were in rival stations. I waited 16 years for this chance."

Bianca on Lino: Not official

By Marinell B. Cruz

IF TV HOST BIANCA GONZALEZ COULD have her way, she would keep to herself details about her supposed rekindled romance with her ex-boyfriend, Star TV 20 owner Lino Cayetano.

"It's hard for me to discuss the status of our relationship. It's better for the reply to come from the guy. But he's not here," Bianca said during the press conference of "Cinema News Mo!," which she co-hosts with Ed Sherman on Cinema One.

Last month, Bianca and Lino were spotted in Singapore's Sentosa Island.

The two met in 2005 on the set of the now defunct ASAP, 08 show, "Star Dance," which Bianca co-hosted with Andre Aquosca and JC de Vera. They became a couple for over a year and a half but broke up in October 2006, after a quarrel over Bianca's closeness to fellow "Pinoy Big Brother" housemate Jinkee Macalda. Lino has also been linked to KC Concepcion, Sharon Cuneta's daughter.

"Honestly, we're not back together—official ka," she told Inquirer Entertainment on Thursday. "Unlike two people who just met, we already know each other—are good and bad traits. Our relationship is in a stage in which we're enjoying talking to each other again."

According to Bianca, Lino is currently vacationing in the United States. He is considering taking a job abroad, after doing what's close to Singapore recently and meeting producers there.

'He knows'

Bianca admitted that her meeting with Lino in Singapore has been planned early on. "I didn't just show up there and told him to meet up with me. He knew I was coming. His family knows, too."

She denied talk that it was Lino's breakup with KC that is against their intimate. "I never asked what happened to them because it's really [a] not my business. If I want to get together with someone, I don't want to [confess] him with past issues. Ang mas gusto ko lang, relate, sasabihin sa amin ng [sa] sarili," Bianca said.

The TV host added: "I just want to keep our relationship where it is now. It's all in the past that he's first-to-[be] relationship, I don't want to be the rebound girl."

(Email mbcruz@inquirer.com.ph)

Rufa Mae: Same flight, that's all

By the INQUIRER and INQUIRER.net Entertainment staff

A RUMOR INSIDE THE ROUNDhouse Friday that sexy star Rufa Mae Quinto was spotted near to a very powerful man in a plane bound for Hong Kong. Rumors linked Pinay Video stunt diva Sher replied with dispatch: "We were in the same plane. There's nothing wrong with that, right?" She said she went to HK "for my hair-extensions business." She was back the next day to "Showbiz Unlimited."

Driving Ms Kristine

According to sundry rumors, Oyo Boy is one Krisline Mansueto's frequent visitor on the set of "Big Love." Krisline's explanation: "Isa o sa'min po nag-lu-lakwe do'n (Oyo). Kasi po sasakay do'n sa kotse. Hindi po namin inaabot nang ganoon katagal kasi ang layo namamahay kasi ng (Oyo)."

Traumatic experience

A major movie company allegedly harbored the malcontents dollar of an indie filmmaker. Poor kid was asked to produce 70 percent of the film. A budding independent had a double traumatic experience. She was asked to remake her work-comedian dance, "Until I gave up and quit because [my] daughter."

Bonus go by a certain "Jeremiah," creativity be damned.

Top of the talk shows (Feb 23-24)

For those who missed the weekend's TV gabfests. (And why we are sure they did not missed.)

• Cristine Reyes on dating Jessica Zafra but Salvador's live.

Not long women ever oh. Actually date. (Here we go again.)

• Bernard Aglaroso on the incredible union of Gene Montano and Snooze Gruz.

Okay na sila. Nag-usap na sila. Magkasama na sila. Nag-date nga sila nung Valentine's." Kitam what? He had a crystal ball that said they were going to reconcile when "Pulso" opened.

• Josephine Mercado on breaking up with Rodel Cortez.

Kasi ang hirap eh. Hanging. Hindi mo alam kung kaya pa ba o hindi na. Ayaw lang na sabihin kung ayaw na kasi ayaw niya sa kanya mangyari ang... Ang gusto talaga, iPod crystal ball nga eh'di ba, ang pumasok when they are ready. "Hell Blood Sunset," opens March 5.

• Claudia Garcia on reports that Patrick doubted he was the father of

GRATEFUL: Barretto-linked housemate Jon Santos Pumalaan smiles on the floor, snapping this pic during her EB launch. "Why are you down there?"

Anne's ex's unborn child.

"When Ara called me to say she was pregnant... I did not question [it]. I told her, call me mom. Anong sa mukhot... Kung ako nga, hindi ako magkakaroon eh. At Patrick po siya!" (Uh.)

• Mark Hosee, still on match:

"Siempre nanood si Ara. (Kung) may naman gusto sa kin 'yon." (Eh, may sun si Ara?)

• Cristine Reyes on Hello Monsterpet: after no alleged shooting scandal in a QC hotel.

"Ngano, as in wrong pronoun—pag hindi na nanganding matuto ang aso eh wala nang mapuntahang bait, pwede na sila mag-stop." (And how is the new QC deputy?)

• Gretchen's response to a question about the controversy:

"Hoka, alam mo ang policy ko kasi as long as pag negative, ayoko nang maring. Di ba 'yon ang sinasa? (Amen.)

She's not complaining

• Gretchen, on her walkout from the ABS-CBN show by talk show "Entertainment Live!", after switching to videotape on the set about her spat with Judie.

"Ah, nag-propose ako, sana maganda sila ako nung nung time, walang hassles, walang tatakbo... Ako professional eating ako. Hindi ako nagpapa-late. Basta ang hinde-hindi ako nag-tatrabaho. Nag-ing along hassle. Nag-ako along sandaan." (How ahey long may sana

(continued on page 4)

• Jean Garcia, on her decision to Pedi Ravidez:

"We thinker me happy Mula kong dapat dapat Mula kaming dapat i-Ariel. Di ipa-mahal na nabalo."

• Pilo, on their future:

"Ang ewang pagmamahal ang (Ariel) ang kami, siguro walang masama. Hala sumasa akong pakiusap." (Hindi. Okay na in fact).

• Ogie Alcasid, on Regine Velasquez's supposed plans to move to ABS-CBN:

"I will support Regine in whatever decision she makes. Dream ako." (Pilo, no. Its DMB 7 ka.)

• DMB-7, on Regine:

"We are thankful that at this point, there is now a more open communication and share our projects mapped out to suit both the network's programming plans and Regine's schedules." (Now puka ang maging problema.)

Again, again

• Regine, on her music until recently of his alleged cruelty:

"Wala akong pic. I am very, very grateful and I am very, very flattered by ABS-CBN that they think of me. Every time that nanon akong dumating sa show, nanon nanon akong mga coffee at ano. Very flattering kasi hindi alam ako nagpapa-coffee, hindi ko alam kung ano ang gusto ng pagkain. Basta ako, di ba? Kung, I just ignored it like pak, which is 'Betty La Fea' and I really, really wanted to do it. Kaya po ako nag-pasalon sa GMA at kaya po hindi nag-pahere [in GMA] because it was my last dance. Dahil nga po sa magandang nanon ang pakikitungo sa akin ng ABS, nagpasalamat ako sa kanila. Hindi po akong nanonood ng mga sa ABS. Like I said, I'm very flattered na in offer sila sa akin... But at the same time, kasi pinu-pilit ako nagpapasalamat sa GMA for taking good care of me. Like I've said, the decision I've made before is very hard for me to do but I want to stay loyal to GMA. Hindi ko po gustong ang ABS pero po nagpapasa ng proyek but because of what's been going on right now never ang kumuha ng writeup, parang in essence na po nanon na ABS is no longer interested in their offer. Kasi akoy ako na nag-offer sa kanila na pero po nagpa-offer sila. Akoang 'Di ba? Isang beses lang sa...Hala sa ang buong-buong sa point and it's not fair for GMA And I left them, hanging like that. Marami din akong offer." (Is that Lawsuit?)

Email us: realest@inquirer.com.ph

EVEN Rachel Weisz (left as Lucy and pal Rose give (right) to pose.

A magical mystery tour

By Oliver M. Palomino II
Contributor

SONGS, INTERMENTS AND SOLILOQUIES are mixed into Julie Taymor's rendition of Beatles lore in the mystical movie musical "Across the Universe." It's everything you'd expect from "The Lion King" musical director-choreographer-set and visually striking concepts that don't sacrifice the vital human components—only that time she's adapted the music of the world's most popular band.

Like in his previous films "Titus" and "Frida," Taymor masterfully weaves various film images and emotional sentiments here. In a mélange of music, portraits and words, a simple story of two young lovers (and their friends) is told captivatingly aided by dozens of Beatles classics worked into the script. The characters' personal crusade of the '60s is thoughtfully encapsulated, though you must normally see the movie twice.

"Across the Universe" may easily win over Beatles fans because of the sense of familiarity it evokes. The assiduous may find getting into it a challenge at times, but the blind (and its sweet voices, the greater) behind the songs is already evident. From love ballads to socially relevant tunes, the group's compositions provide colors that never falter amidst the very specific periods, situations and people.

The careers of the protagonists are inspired by names from the Beatles catalogue as well. Jude (Jim Sturgess), a dock worker from Liverpool, comes to America and eventually connects with the idealistic Lucy (Evan Rachel Wood). Jude's best friend, Lucy's brother Max (Joe Anderson), is sent to Vietnam, while their other friends—the hedonic Prudence (TV Carpio), the Anglophile singer Sadie (Dana Fuchs) and the Headlights Jo Jo (Martin Luther McCoy)—encounter incidents both home and in protests.

Especially flavorful

The movie is especially flavorful, "Let It Be"-schools-poignant and soulful during the events depicting Lucy's despair and its aftermath. Lucy's quiet rendition of "If I Fell" and "Blackbird" are haunting. Prudence sings "I Wanna Hold Your Hand," concerned fittingly to speak of her unrequited feelings as a shoot guy girl. Jude set himself to Jude's aptly managed version of "Hey Jude," which unceremonially segues into Jude's edgy and pulsating "Helter Skelter."

A number of visual tidbits are utilized, like animations and the superimposition of characters. The superb-type "Strawberry Fields Forever," however, it is an example of using Taymor's genius to, well, bedevil-to-eye eyes. It juxtaposes repeated strawberries (a product of Jude's attraction to strawberries) with blood-hued war footage, strawberry grenades and bombs.

The film's collection of songs actually rivals the "A Hard Day" soundtrack in that it also has inspired Beatles covers you'd want to listen to

(continued on page 4)

Review

Rushes

Forget conventional romance

By Jayson R. Rivera
Contributor

IT'S EASY TO FIXHINDER WITH THE OMAR... actors in young-conversation director Jade Castro's "Exes." As Jade flits on the struggles of a couple trying to survive and find love in the world of contractual employment.

Simple, heartily, and compelling, it is an ever-spoon, a peek into the lives of people we take for granted—ester ladies, power girls, hot-food cooks... The film stars Special Joy Prize, Best Editing, and Best Performance of an actress (for his Palace of the 2007 Cinemalaya Festival). Catch the most special screening you hear about.

Jason Abalos stars as Leo, a young breadwinner who moves from one job to another every few months, the inevitability that is enhanced by an "indie" (read: ill-content).

In this world, relationships are almost as permanent as the jobs. But Leo meets head-strong Tanya (Iwi), who runs the biscuit "niche." She dreams, and actually gets a shot at hosting the cycle, offering Leo a glimpse of hope.

While marketed as a love story, this is unlike most romantic movies that Pinoys are used to. Realistic love issues, screw setting, picture-perfect settings, dreary one-liners, and the requisite happy ending? "Exes" has none of these.

Minus all that "baggage," the movie has room for real-life conflicts. Sequels like a head-hit, but director Jade Castro reserves a seamless take that emotionally curious audiences can relate to. The storyline is one that actors and plot-(in)-sets are down-played. Leo and Tanya have the limited, world-weary demeanor of everyday workers, commercial or otherwise.

In the screen-romance acting, we see real people, not performances. With the believable, well-remembered story, the movie makes an indelible impression on viewers.

Certain areas could stand improvement, though. Bits of the product placements, and think there were enough reasons to make a better-looking film. Indie no longer have to be grainy. The sound is also problematic.

Nikky Garcia gives a great performance, but the story is left hanging. Plus it's hard to figure out how Leo and Tanya end up. It's frustrating because, by this time, we have totally empathized with them.

There again, where these characters live, unfortunately is the only thing that's certain.

DID YOU SEE THESE OSCAR MOMENTS?

From left: Best Actress nominee Cate Blanchett (back to camera) with winner Marion Cotillard; Best Supporting Actor Javier Bardem (facing camera) shows pal Jack Black how happy he is; Best Actor winner Daniel Day-Lewis kisses Best Actor nominee George Clooney; actress Katherine Heigl looks thrilled to be holding a cold cut sandwich on the red carpet.

Roundup

Black film fest

THE EMBASSY OF THE United States of America in Manila and the University of the Philippines Film Institute present a film festival entitled "Black Women on the Silver Screen."

Set on March 1 and 4 at the UP Film Institute, it features three films that pay tribute to African American actresses who have made significant contributions to the film industry.

Admission to the screenings is free. The schedule is as follows:

Monday, March 1—10 a.m., "The Rose Petal Blue" (2003, Angela Bassett). Director, 1 p.m., "Midnight" (1957, Susan Seid, Dan Adams, 3:30 p.m., "Introducing Dorothy Dandridge" (1999, Halle Berry). Monologues, 4 p.m., "Cleo" (1975, Fran Drew). Monologues, 7 p.m., "Sister" (1995, Josephine Baker). Dan Adams.

Tuesday, March 4—10 a.m., "Sounder" (1972, Cicely Tyson and Paul Winfield). Dan Adams, 1 p.m., "Hallelujah" (1929, Nina Mae McKinney). Dan Adams, 4 p.m., "Cabin in the Sky" (1943, Ethel Waters and Lena Horne). Dan Adams, 7 p.m., "Stormy Weather" (1943, Lena Horne and Ethel Waters). Dan Adams.

Digital movie

Cinema One Original's independent digital film "Unidressed," directed by Jerrold Tarog, will be screened tomorrow at the Sky Cable Cinema 1 at 7 p.m. and 9 p.m.

The movie is about a couple-less filmmaker, Ryan Reyes, who unexpectedly meets a former politician.

This politician's daughter to confess the issues he committed while in office before Ryan's camera.

BFGF promo

A celebrity date with "My Best Friend's Girlfriend" star Marian Rivera plus a Bench special edition mobile phone is at stake for lucky winners of the Black Beyes directed Regal Entertainment-GMA Films' Valentine offering.

Participants should simply answer the question, "How many times did Richard and Marian share in the movie BFGF?"

Contact: an Aliens, Bride and Cowgirl, Text KISSES and answer (ex: KISSES <10>) to 4627 for Smart, Globe and Sun subscribers. Promo runs until March 31.

Anvil awardee

ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corporation bagged four Anvil Awards from the Public Relations Society of the Philippines this year, including the Bronze Anvil for its coverage of the Asian Tsunami. Gma Logos and the Making of ABS-CBN," which also received an Anvil Award of Excellence.

The network's Hero Media Congress also obtained an Anvil Award of Excellence while its "Boto Mo, Bawal Mo" entered an Anvil Award of Merit.

Palace show

"My Pure Energy" and UNICEF Ambassador of Goodwill Gary Valenciano held the staging of "Lord Me Lord," one of his songs, with 10 performers from the Stations

ABS-CBN delegation led by Corporate Communication head Bing Rivera (standing, third from R), at the Anvil Awards.

of Biblical Praise (Graduate Seventh College) Guild during the recent "Sol ng Sining ni Makesong."

The event was spearheaded by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) with the Office of the Pls on Culture (OPC) and the City of Manila.

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GALLERIA

1 KITE RUNNER • TAK	6 3:10 TO YUMA
2 LIHIM si ANTONIO	7 DAN IN REAL LIFE
3 THE FLOCK	8 indietime: DAYBREAK / SELDA
4 THE WATER HORSE	9 PRIVATE MOMENTS
5 MY BIG LOVE	10 JUMPER / VANTAGE POINT

ERMITA

1 MY BIG LOVE	6 VANTAGE POINT / JUMPER
2 THE ASSASSINATION of JESSE JAMES / UNTRACEABLE	7 PRIVATE MOMENTS
3 DAN IN REAL LIFE	1 KITE RUNNER
4 THE FLOCK	3 3:10 TO YUMA
5 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND	2 THE WATER HORSE

METRO EAST

1 VANTAGE POINT / JUMPER	6 DAN IN REAL LIFE
2 MY BIG LOVE	8 PRIVATE MOMENTS
3 THE WATER HORSE	7 3:10 TO YUMA
4 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND	9 THE FLOCK

NOVALICHES

1 MY BIG LOVE	4 PRIVATE MOMENTS
2 THE WATER HORSE	5 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND
3 3:10 TO YUMA	6 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND

PIONEER

1 MY BIG LOVE	3 THE FLOCK
2 THE WATER HORSE	4 KITE RUNNER / DAN in REAL LIFE

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3 JUMPER / THE BUCKET LIST	

LIPA

1 MY BIG LOVE	4 ONE MISSED CALL
2 VANTAGE POINT	5 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND
3 ONE MISSED CALL	

DASMARIÑAS

1 MY BIG LOVE	4 JUMPER / THE BUCKET LIST
2 THE WATER HORSE	5 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND
3 JUMPER / THE BUCKET LIST	

IMUS

1 MY BIG LOVE	4 JUMPER
2 THE WATER HORSE	
3 VANTAGE POINT	

ANGELES

1 MY BIG LOVE	4 27 DRESSES
2 THE WATER HORSE	
3 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND	

TARLAC

1 IN THE NAME of the KING	3 ONE MISSED CALL
2 JUMPER	

STARMILLS

1 THE WATER HORSE	4 27 DRESSES / THE BUCKET LIST
2 MY BIG LOVE	5 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND
3 THE SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES	6 ONE MISSED CALL

BACOLOD

1 MY BIG LOVE	5 JUMPER / MY BFGF
2 THE WATER HORSE	6 27 DRESSES
3 VANTAGE POINT	
4 THE SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES	

ILOILO

1 MY BIG LOVE	4 THE SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES
2 THE WATER HORSE	
3 VANTAGE POINT	

Robin back to over-the-top form

MAIN ABS-CBN BIGWIG STUNTED TEEN-oming three-area evening schemers ("Kung Fu Kids," "Lobo," "Mini"), we looked around, searching for Gloh-T's "nemesis" in the detective-story program launches.

It's taken some time for that event to be made, but it's finally come in the form of "Joaquin Bordado," a fantasy-action-drama series starring Robin Padilla as a heavily tattooed man whose epidermal art figures come to super heroic life in moments of great need or danger.

One wheatyo can't serve as an equalizer for

three new shows. But it's a start, at least, and GMA has a number of other new evening TV series about to make their debut, so ABS-CBN can't afford to rest on its wings.

So, how does "Joaquin Bordado" shape up as GMA's blockbuster evening draw? On the plus side, many of its special effects are impressive to behold, and its plot reveals about various comings-to-super heroic-life to a relevant

Mannerly acting

Trouble is, Robin Padilla, who impressed us a few years ago by finally toning in a good, focused performance in "La Vista Loca" (co-star Wash Mickey's film directorial career), is back to his old, bimmery acting style in his new TV series.

He has more spirit gone back to flashing his eyes, gritting his teeth and taking "dramatic" poses, generally acting up a storm (above slight nuances shower would suffice).

Unfortunately, instead of impressing viewers, it made cop on a drug, hyperactive, maniacal, tenderness-and-talk-too-much awesome to-mode.

"La Vista Loca" showed that Robin has it in him to give a disciplined, focused and informed performance, so all is not lost. In his new show, however, it looks like the actor has not been judiciously reinvested and has been left to his own florid, melodramatic devices. So it's back to square one for him.

Production values

The sore-thumb quality of Robin's perpetual bemuses even more obvious in his scenes with the more enlightened Jan Cabello, who tries to play it low, felt and tried despite the melodramatic display around her. She puts up a good fight, but it really is no contest, since volume and volubility are tough sponges to follow.

On the other hand, "Joaquin Bordado" should be praised for production values that include some evocative locations, effectively dramatic lighting, and camera work that engages a number of its scenes with its visceral dynamism.

Now, if the new series' actors can only match those production plus points with a genuine dynamism of their own, GMA-7's latest human-action-adventure series could end up on the down in heat.

'Off the Leash'

Beginning March 1 on Animal Planet, "Off the Leash" exposes the dog-eat-dog world of the Hollywood pet talent industry. Initial days at 8 p.m., the show goes inside a pet talent agency to reveal how far some people will go to enable their dogs to become four-legged stars.

The first episode focuses on a big open casting call that pressures both pups and their owners to put their best paws and feet forward. A special search is on for a "Dream Team" of seven dogs with the most star potential. Replay is on March 3 at 11 p.m.

On Studio 23

There drawn on his viewers' attention this month: The second season of "Crime and Punish" (Friday, 9:30 p.m.) shows how the FBI's Behavioral Analysis Unit deciphers the clues given to it by a psychopath to tour his most recent victim.

The new show, "Private Practice," (Thursday, 9:30 p.m.) tells the story of renowned surgeon Addison Montgomery (Kate Walsh), after leaving Seattle Grace Hospital, she meets new colleagues at Oceanside Wellness who are very successful in their profession, but with private lives that could a little more conscience.

Finally, "Pepper" (Tuesday, 9:30 p.m.) is a comedy-fantasy show about Sam (Bret Harrison), who finds out that his fellow solid his soul to the devil! Now that he's 30, he's required to work for his new boss — and track down evil souls that have escaped from hell.

A magical mystery...

From page E1

reportedly Lara Aida and the gang become people you can be, even when she needs compassion the spiritist sometimes. Still, Taymor's affection for the Beatles and their love-struck characters is obvious. She knew them (yeah, yeah, yeah), and with a love like that, you know you should be glad. And you are.

POWER PLANT CINEMA

THE FLOCK 1:20, 2:30, 5:00, 8:00, 10:20

THE WATER HORSE (PG13) 12:30, 2:50, 5:20, 7:40, 10:10

DAN IN REAL LIFE (PG13) 1:40, 3:50, 8:00, 8:10, 10:20

MY BIG LOVE 12:40, 3:00, 5:30, 7:40, 9:10

KITE RUNNER (PG13) 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 9:50

3:10 TO YUMA (R13) 12:30, 3:00, 5:30, 8:00, 10:30

SHOWS & SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

SHANG CINEPLEX

1) Vantage Point (PG13)
2) Dan In Real Life (PG13) 12:00, 2:40, 5:10, 7:30, 9:50
3) My Big Love (Subject for MTRCB Rating)
4) Water Horse (GP) 2:30, 4:50, 7:20, 9:50
Kite Runner (PG13) 1:30, 4:00, 6:30, 9:20

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AT THE CINEMAS

GLORIETTA 1	1 3:10 TO YUMA	2 THE FLOCK	3 MY BIG LOVE	4 MY BIG LOVE
GLORIETTA 4	1 VANTAGE POINT	2 THE FLOCK	3 THE WATER HORSE	
	4 KITE RUNNER	5 3:10 TO YUMA	6 MY BIG LOVE	7 DAN IN REAL LIFE
GREENBELT 1	1 THE ASSASSINATION OF JESSE JAMES	2 MY BIG LOVE		
GREENBELT 3	1 VANTAGE POINT	2 THE WATER HORSE		
	3 JUNO	4 3:10 TO YUMA	5 DAN IN REAL LIFE	
ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THE WATER HORSE	2 DAN IN REAL LIFE		
	3 MY BIG LOVE	4 KITE RUNNER	5 3:10 TO YUMA	
AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 MY BIG LOVE	2 THE WATER HORSE	3 ALVIN'T MAKIT: THE TUNES	4 JUMPER
MARKET! MARKET!	1 MY BIG LOVE	2 MY BEST FRIEND'S GIRLFRIEND		
	3 THE FLOCK	4 THE WATER HORSE	5 3:10 TO YUMA	
TRINOMA	1 MY BIG LOVE	2 VANTAGE POINT	3 3:10 TO YUMA	4 KITE RUNNER
	5 THE FLOCK	6 DAN IN REAL LIFE	7 THE WATER HORSE	

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ACROSS THE UNIVERSE

AT THE MALLS

Ayala Malls

Glorietta — MPI Installment Madness — Feb.28 to Mar.9, Glorietta Activity Center

Greenbelt — Greenbelt 3 Dance Theatre Presents: BROADWAY SHOWSTOPPERS — March 2, 5pm; Greenbelt 3 Park

Alabang Town Center — Totally Spiers live at Trinoma — Catch Sam, Conor, and Alex of Totally Spiers live at Market! Market! February 29 to March 2, 11am, 3pm & 8pm, Activity Center

Ayala Center Cebu — MIL & MORE PROMO — February 15 to March 16

Market! Market! — Totally Spiers live at Trinoma — Catch Sam, Conor, and Alex of Totally Spiers live at Market! Market! March 1, 4 & 8 : 11am, 4:30 & 8:45pm, Activity Center

CircleOne — Repertory Philippines presents ROMANCE (R-12) — February 29 to March 16, 2008 — For inquiries, you can call 631-0116 or visit www.repertory.circleone.com

Ayala Museum — Silent Homecoming at the Ayala Museum Diorama — Ongoing until March 2, 2008 — For more information, please call 757-7117 or e-mail us at ayala@ayalamuseum.org

Tri Noma — Ambient Sounds at the Park — Enjoy beautiful music this February as you dine alfresco at Trinoma — Feb. 29, 6pm; 3rd Level Trinoma Park

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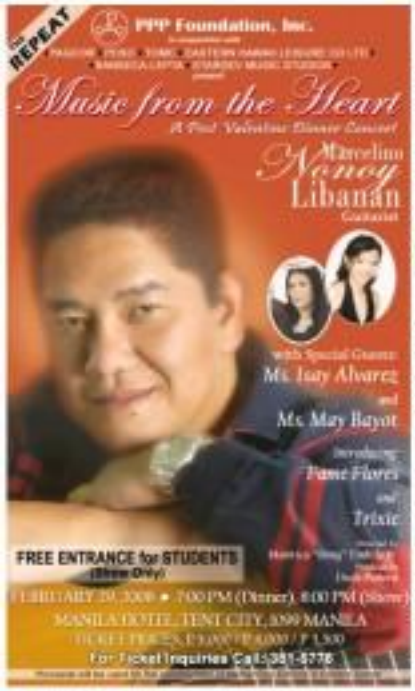
3rd RP int'l jazz fest opens tomorrow



THE 3RD PHILIPPINE INTERNATIONAL Jazz Festival opens tomorrow with workshops featuring the following artists: Bob Awes, Steve Maidaya, David Stanek Trio (The Eastern University); Frank Mosaic Trio (with the UST Jazz Band), Mac 3, University of Iloilo, Tamao and Mac 4, University of the Philippines).

The **mall shows** start on Mar. 1 at Glorietta with Gerard Salonga (El Jazz ensemble), Bob Awes Group, Executives Band, Frank Mosaic Trio and the UST Drum & Bugle Corps; Mac 4 at Greenhills with Rhythm & Inline, Whitetooth, Rise the Stake, Troubled Pendrew Blue Rain and Rockchromic; and Mac 8 at Robinsons High Street with Tillo Morales, Socorro de Castro, Aurora Tongco, Emery Gatindig Band, Tet Fuentes, Bombay and Gary Valenciano; and Mac 9 at the Boulevard Tent with Sara Lazarek, Guanera and Eggie Moran.

The full concert kick off Mar. 10 at Bulwagang Filipinas Plaza with Lee Aranzo, Tillo Morales, Chris Medina and Jamina. Log on to the festival's web site philjazzfest.com for tickets and other details.

'Golden Divas'

Pilita Corrales, Carmen Pereira and Carmen Soriano perform together in "Golden Divas," Mar. 7 and 8 at the Music Museum.

The three singing idols whose popularity peaked in the 1960s and '70s are rumored as regular users of their classic hits.

Call 721-6726 and 721-1605.

'Music From the Heart'

Investigator Corporation Marcelino Libanan takes time out to play guitar in "Music From the Heart Part 2," with singers Inay Aharon, Mary Bayot and other guests, on Feb. 29 at the Tent City of Manila Hotel.

Libanan, a self-taught guitar player, won a winner in the Classical Guitar Solo B Category at the 2005 National Music Competition for Young Artists (NAMCYA).

Proceeds of the concert will help build a scholarship in Eastern Samar.

Tonight

Arni Cruz at Mojo's Bar Stairs, 3rd Level, Greenhill 2.

The Members, 8 p.m., Farmer Circle, Eastwood City.

Nyna Velasco at Sugahoria Pasig.

With Mac Quinto, Duncan Station and Luke Mejares at Metrobar, G/F Hive Ave. Quezon City.

Tomorrow

North at the Araneta Coliseum. Call 911-5555.

Joel Bergan, Ricky Dimes in the lookround 92.7 8 p.m., CCP.

Jaboulo Boys, ICH/3:30, Music Museum.

Mar. 1

Su Yea at the Araneta Coliseum.

DP Manila Chorale, with guest Eyla, Anne Curtis at Sin auditorium, Poro Catholic School.

Richard Merk and Rachel Ann Wells at the Sugahoria Hotel, Sacobia.

Mar. 2

Jesse Bayes with Jay Untalbal, Manila Polo Club.

Mar. 5

Maroon 5 at the Araneta Coliseum. Call 911-5555.

PILITA Corrales, Carmen Pereira and Carmen Soriano

Cesare & The Electric Underground Collective, University of Makati.

Mar. 9

Incubus at the Araneta Coliseum. Call 911-5555.

Mar. 11

Colbie Caillat, 7 p.m., Glorietta 4/ Ardy Gomez Makati.

Mar. 12

Mandy Moore, 7:30 p.m., Crystal Plaza, Eastwood City. Call 687-8778 to 7 Level 0917-8392389 for tickets.

Colbie Caillat, 6 p.m., Trinoma, Quezon City.

Mar. 15

Harry Connick Jr. at the Plenary Hall, PICC. Call 911-5555 and 891-

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